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LYNN WILLIAMS

WHY ANIMATION ARTIST
DARRELL McNEILL
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#47

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S

COMICS INTERVIEW

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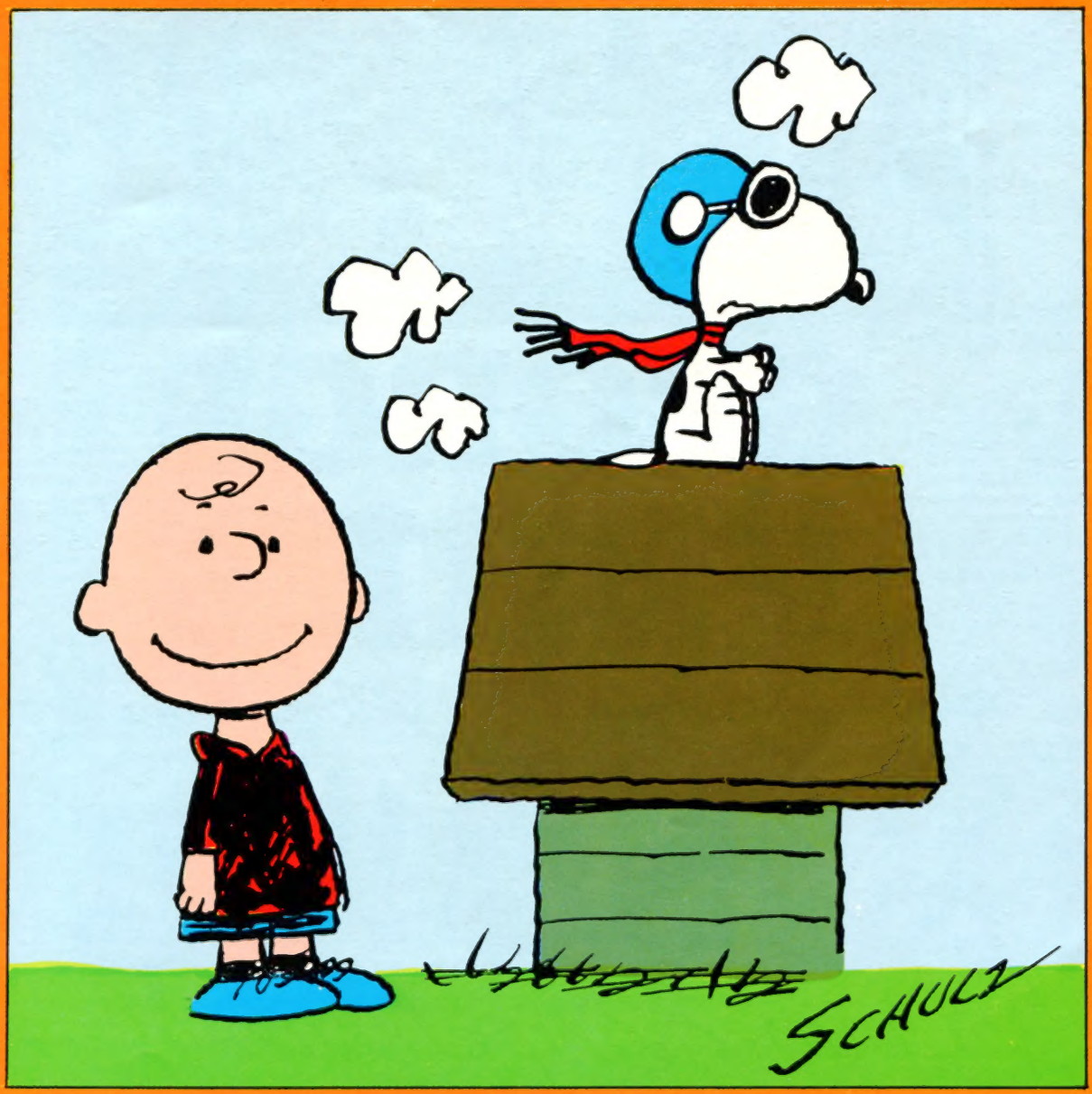

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UP FRONT

If you're among our longtime readers, or have just recently discovered COMICS INTERVIEW, you know that we are unique among periodicals covering the comics scene. We bring you interviews with the pros, by the pros, giving you an inside ear to what the comics industry is saying.

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-Dave

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL:
UP FRONT
a rap with *dak*
5

WRITER/ARTIST:
CHARLES SCHULZ
snoopy's master "sparky" speaks to *shel dorf*
6

ARTIST:
LYNN WILLIAMS
conversation with a cartoonist, compliments of shel dorf
26

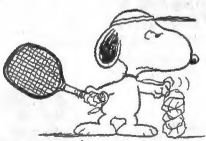
ARTIST:
DARRELL McNEIL
spills the secret battles of saturday morning censors to *ken jones*
35

PRODUCTION ARTISTS:
PAUL TALLERDAY & BARBARA MARKER
blackthorne's innovative aces tell *shel dorf* a tale of colors & numbers
39

GAMING:
JOE ITALIANO
from disneyland to the land down under with *ken jones*
55

LETTERS:
THE LAST WORD
you shoot, we dance
64

"I really know nothing about psychology



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When I first met Charles Schulz, there was a feeling I'd known him for years. At each consecutive meeting that feeling has gotten stronger. There is a sympatico brotherhood between us two people who, after all these years, are still in love with Cartooning. We were both delighted by the strip CALVIN & HOBBS winning the Reuben Award. This happened in New York last May, one day after Charles Schulz was inducted into the Cartoonist Hall Of Fame at The Museum of Cartoon Art in Rye Brook, NY, also winning their "Golden Brick" award for lifetime achievement.

SHEL DORF: *Sparky, thanks for agreeing to this interview. At our C.A.P.S. meeting in Los Angeles, Ed McGeean was taken to task for printing the name of Charles Schulz with a "t" in our newsletter. He was publicly embarrassed. So we're here with the man himself and I'd like to talk with you about how many other people spell your name with a "t."*

CHARLES "SPARKY" SCHULZ: I cannot believe the inefficiency of someone who will write to you — especially when he or she wants a big favor — and does not even take the time to spell your name right. Last year I did one of these classroom interviews where they hooked up the microphone and a loudspeaker in the classroom; a boy wrote to me and he wanted to know if I would take part in this, and I wrote back. And when we finally reached appointment day and the phone rang and I got on the line with him, I said, "Before we begin, when you wrote me the letter did your teacher help you with it?" He says yes, and I said, "Well, I think the teacher and you and all of the people in your class should know right now — this is one thing you can learn — when you write to somebody in the days to come, whether it's a business letter or a social letter, the first thing that you should do is make sure that you spell the name of the person to whom you are writing correctly. You did not spell my name right." And all the class laughed — it must have been very embarrassing for the teacher — but I don't understand that sort of thing. That would be the first thing that I would think of, if I were writing to somebody.

SHEL: *Well, would you personally forgive my good friend Ed McGeean?*

SPARKY: Probably. *(Laughter.)*

SHEL: *Anyway, this great celebrity status that you've achieved through . . . how many years in the business?*

SPARKY: I guess it's about 36 now.

SHEL: *That had to have some humble beginnings, so let's go back to the beginning — what was your first published drawing?*

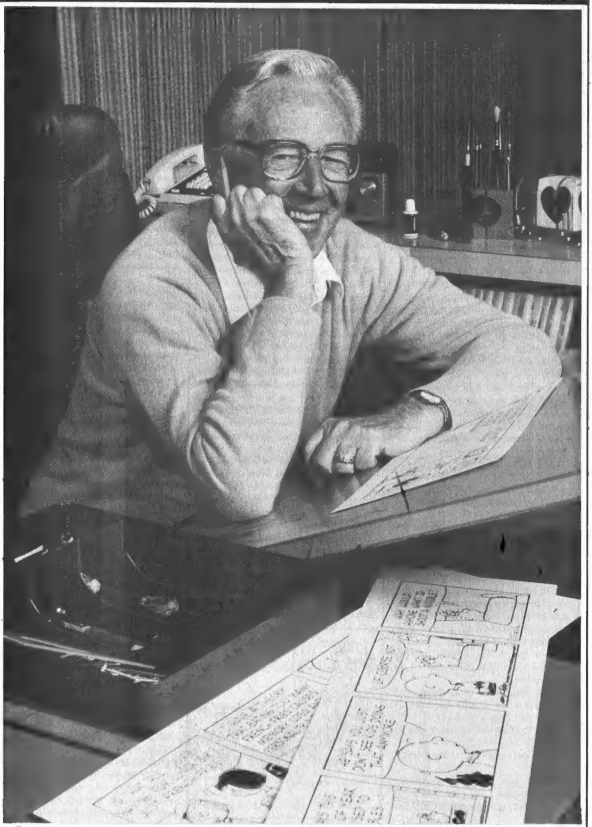
SPARKY: Oh, the first published drawing was p robably a few little kids cartoons in THE MINNEAPOLIS STAR, but I got into a slight hassle with the editor after he printed two of them, and then I went over to the St. Paul paper which is where LITTLE FOLKS started. I did a few other things, like I made a small drawing of a radio for a man who ran a little Radio Shack store next to my dad's barber shop. I think I charged him $5.00 for it.

SHEL: *Where did this ad appear? Was it in the paper?*

SPARKY: I don't even know where it appeared, but it was done right after the War when I came home. I remember before that I did a huge sign for a man who ran a dry-cleaning establishment up in the next block from my dad's barber shop, listing all of the garments and how much dry cleaning costs for each one of them, and I was

CHARLES SCHULZ

or psychiatry or philosophy or anything."



Photos: David Crommie

"I'm always willing to be honorary chair-

ashamed even to charge him for it. When he asked me how much I wanted I said, "Well, how about $2.50 which I will take out in trade?" So that was probably the first money I ever made from art.

Just before the War, I worked for the Associated Letter Service, which was a direct mail advertising firm in downtown St. Paul, and somehow they found out that I could draw. They had a mimeograph machine and they had photo offset, and I would make a few cartoons for them whenever they needed it — and so for $16.00 a week they got a delivery boy and someone who worked in the stockroom, wrapping packages and things, and a cartoonist, which was not a bad deal for them, I guess. And then, of course, I got drafted and didn't get a chance to do anything for three years.

My comic strips that I was drawing before World War II were really inspired by WASH TUBBS and CAPTAIN EASY. I loved that action that **Roy Crane** had put into his work. I described it in the foreword to the book that I was asked to write as a rollicking style of drawing, which is what he had. I don't think he was necessarily very funny. I think if there was any quality of his work that was lacking it was real humor, but the drawing was unsurpassed; and so he was my ideal at that stage. And then, of course, I liked LI'L ABNER and the work of **Milton Caniff**, so I tried drawing things like that. I was even inspired for awhile to do a "Foreign Legion" page like PRINCE VALIANT, but of course I got nowhere like it.

SHEL: *That must have been very frustrating to you. Doesn't your talent lie more in the "bigfoot" school?*

SPARKY: *(Laughter.)* I hadn't thought about it.

SHEL: *Can you really draw like PRINCE VALIANT?*

SPARKY: Sure. I can draw a lot better than people think I can. I don't think that a person works up to his ability. I think that

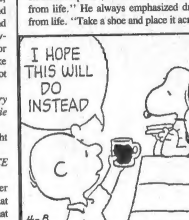
people who are really pretty good at something work almost below their ability. I don't think you can cartoon well until you can draw well. I don't think it's possible to cartoon a good shoe until you know how to draw an actual shoe very well.

SHEL: *Right. Leonard Starr once told me in an interview that he was frustrated to see that teachers were teaching distortion when you have to start with the norm first. Picasso went through a period, for instance, where he was drawing realistically, before he started all in distortion.*

SPARKY: Well, then too, you see, I was taking the correspondence course in Art Instruction when I was a senior in high school, and in the first year I was out.

SHEL: *Was Art Instruction sort of the realistic school or was it cartooning?*

SPARKY: It was cartooning and illustration. There was an old-time cartoonist who was on the staff, **Frank Wing** — he drew a feature called YESTERDAYS — and he was of the school where everything should be drawn quite accurately; and although I mailed my lessonwork on over, later on after I'd graduated I used to take my cartoons over to him, and I used to listen to him after I got a job there myself, sitting next to him at his desk, telling the students on the Dictaphone, "Draw from life. Draw from life." He always emphasized draw from life. "Take a shoe and place it across



the room from yourself and draw it from different angles. Draw the wrinkles in people's clothing." All of this kind of thing. From that then you can later exaggerate in your drawing.

But I remember copying Mickey Mouse and Popeye and the Three Little Pigs and characters like that when I was small, drawing them on the covers of my notebooks, and then for other kids in the class, when they saw that I had decorated my notebooks that way. I remember one time when, I think I was about in the ninth grade, there was an English project where we were supposed to write an essay on something, a rather long essay, and one of the other boys in the class illustrated his; and somehow the teacher found out I could draw and said, "Charles, why didn't you do the same thing?" Well, the reason that I didn't do it was I thought that was a rather egotistical thing to do and that it was almost unfair. I didn't think it was right to take advantage of your drawing ability when that wasn't part of the project.

So I never really did much drawing in school, although I took a course when I was a senior in high school that was called illustration, and I liked that. I never liked art classes. They always had us either making woodcuts, which I couldn't stand — I never made a woodcut in my life — or else we had to paint flowers in watercolors, and I hated watercolors. I think the thing that I despised mostly about art classes in school was that they were too slow. I was always very fast at drawing and I would get things done very quickly, and then would have to wait around while the other people who unfortunately weren't given this amount of ability in drawing finished up, and the projects just lasted too long. So I heard in high school that there was a class called illustration which supposedly had more drawing in it, and took that and had a lot of fun. In fact, I got my grades in the last two classes — they were both double-As, which was almost unheard of.

SHEL: *Let's take the early days of LITTLE FOLKS. Where did you work? Where was your studio? Was it at home?*

SPARKY: Well, mainly I did my work at the correspondence school. There was a large room — and when I started there were maybe a dozen instructors, and by the time I quit I suppose there were close to 20 or 25 of us — and we each had a nice large desk. We had certain divisions of the course that we were assigned, and when we completed our work we were allowed to do anything we wanted. So I did a lot of my freelance work and practicing at the desk, and I used their envelopes and their cardboard and their mailing systems to send my

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man of any disease that I might get."

things out, and I began to experiment with drawing little, tiny kids. Even **Frank Wing** said, "You should keep drawing those kids, Sparky. They're kind of good." And one day I sent in one to THE SATURDAY EVENING POST just cold — a complete little drawing of a kid sitting way out at the end of a chaise longue with his feet on a little extra stool that he obviously didn't need — and lo and behold they bought it for $40.00. So I began to send in other little kid cartoons, and I got rejected. I actually sold a few that had adults in them, but the adult drawings were never quite what I wanted them to be. I hadn't achieved any distinct style in drawing adults. But my little kid cartoons were very much like others that were being drawn in that day — I was just one of a pattern that was going on at that time.

SHEL: *REGULAR FELLOWS by . . .*

SPARKY: No-no-no-no. That was way before. REGULAR FELLOWS was not at all like what we were doing in the '50s. REGULAR FELLOWS was a style of drawing which was good cartooning but was much more realistic. The kids were in reasonable proportions, and they really weren't very funny, and the strips . . .

What I introduced, and what is difficult to grasp at this time, was something brand new. I introduced the very slight incident. I can remember creating it sitting at the desk, where what would happen in the three panels that I was drawing at that time was a very brief and slight incident. No one had ever done that before in comic strips. Comic strips were the school of "Well, what are we going to do today?" type — much too drawn out and with a little joke at the end that really was not worth the whole page that it was devoted to. So I changed all of that, and I think very few people realize now, as they look back at my work and compare it, how new what I was doing at that time was. I think I introduced a whole brand-new approach to comic-strip humor.

SHEL: *Oh, yes. It was a genile, quiet type of humor. One in particular that comes to mind is having a leaf fall off a tree.*

SPARKY: Yeah. Now, I suppose gag cartoonists had done this — people in THE POST, COLLIERS, NEW YORKER, that sort of thing — but it had never been done in comic strips really before. SKIPPY might have had things like that. It's interesting to look back upon the work of others, and I see that **Percy Crosby** did a lot of things that were similar to what I did later. Of course, he had a beautiful penline and a wonderful, free way of drawing, and it's a shame that there's no more room these days for that type of drawing. But I think SKIPPY influenced me quite a bit, too — but by influence I must emphasize I never mean copy.

SHEL: *Now, you also write your stuff, so the writing side of your abilities is also important. You write about the human condition very knowingly. Did you have this sort of analysis of life at that early age? Just what were your cartoons about? Were you editorializing or was it just a reflection of life around you?*

SPARKY: I never thought of myself as having any writing ability at all. I never thought of myself as having any kind of philosophical approach. I really know nothing about psychology or psychiatry or philosophy or anything like that.

SHEL: *Let me ask you what the working atmosphere was like at Art Instruction where you started with this gentle, quiet type of humor. Was it a relaxed work situation that was responsible for that? Did you have your own private office?*

SPARKY: No. It was a large room and our desks all butted up against one another; but it was a relaxed atmosphere and they were all bright people, and they were bright people from different backgrounds who had different ambitions. I had a friend, **Jim Sasseville**, who could draw just beautifully, and another friend, **George Letness**, who had one of the finest lines I've ever seen. He could draw anything. They were really very highly talented people there.

SHEL: *And they were content to be teachers? Weren't they trying to get their own strips like you were?*

SPARKY: No. I was the only one that was really working on a comic strip. Oh, a couple others were trying, but basically I was the really fanatical one along those lines. Some of them wanted to be painters, some illustrators. They all had different ambitions. There was a girl there that I liked very much — I eventually married her sister — but she did some fashion drawings, animal paintings, portrait work. It was a room full of very talented people.

Walter J. Wilwerding, who was a great animal painter in his day — did covers for SPORTS AFIELD and magazines like that; I have some of his paintings here in my studio now — was in charge of the room and he was very liberal in the way he ran the room. It was a wonderful place to work. It was not unlike working in a newspaper office — where cartoonists could no longer get a chance to get their start. But it helped me a lot because these were cultured people, too. Of course, I was not very well

A recent step in the evolution of the "slight incident," which Sparky "can remember creating . . . No one had ever done that before in comic strips."

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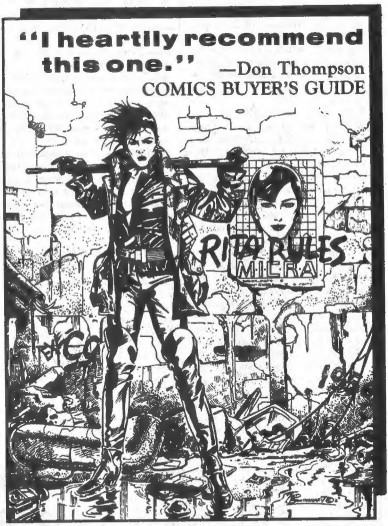
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"Of course, I was not well educated."

educated. I'd only gone to high school. Several of us were returned World War II veterans — but these were people that talked about good literature and good painting and all of those kinds of things. It was a great place for me to grow up after World War II.

SHEL: *Was it a 9:00 to 5:00 situation?*

SPARKY: Oh, yes. *(Laughter.)*

SHEL: *So that sort of established your work patterns. I mean, I understand you still follow that work pattern.*

SPARKY: I think my work pattern, Shel, has been designed more by family life than by anything else. After I got married, the children came along quite rapidly . . .

SHEL: *How many?*

SPARKY: We had five children eventually — and I just discovered that my place was to be with the kids; and so I always enjoyed getting up in the morning and taking them to school, or if they took the bus then down to the bus stop, and picking them up after school. That was the joy of my life! And if the two boys and some of their friends would come up to my studio at 3:00 in the afternoon and say, "C'mon, Dad, let's go play ball," I was always ready to go play ball. I liked doing that sort of thing. And even during the day, during the summer, they would say, "C'mon, Dad. We got a few kids over and we need a permanent pitcher." So I'd drop everything and go out and play ball with them because *that* was more important than drawing cartoons!

SHEL: *Would you say they're better people because of your good fathering?*

SPARKY: I . . . I don't know. *(Laughter.)* I don't take credit for that. I've always thought that I was a good father, but what we think of ourselves is probably not always the answer. I was never a very critical father.

SHEL: *You left the discipline to your wife?*

SPARKY: I don't think there was that much discipline necessarily — a very good group of kids.

SHEL: *Sports has always been an active part of your life, hasn't it? So many cartoonists get very heavy just from all of the hours spent sitting down at the board, not to mention everything else that's a part of the trade. You've kept your figure nicely through the years. How do you do it?*

SPARKY: I dunno. When I'm at my most active I play golf, tennis and hockey throughout the week. I play hockey every Tuesday night, and usually take part in a nighttime tennis league once a week, and I've been trying to play golf a couple of times a week lately.

SHEL: *Have you always done this?*

SPARKY: I played on the high school golf team. I took up golf when I was 15 as a way of combatting other sports where there was a coach who said you weren't good enough to play and had you sit on the bench. In my day you could play in any golf tournament you wanted as long as you just entered it. There was nobody to say you weren't good enough. So I actually played in the St. Paul Open a couple of times where **Sam Snead** was playing, and **Ben Hogan** and all of the big stars. All I did was give them my entry fee and I played.

SHEL: *That's great. Did you learn something from those guys?*

SPARKY: Yeah, I learned a lot watching. I used to follow **Sam Snead** around and watch every shot that he made. He was my hero. Somebody asked me once, a high school student wrote and said, "We're writing to people to find out who their three heroes are. Who are yours?" I said **Sam Snead, Billy Jean King** and **General Eisenhower.** I always wondered what the teacher thought of that group of characters. *(Laughter.)*

SHEL: *Sparky, let's go back to when you first connected with LITTLE FOLKS — was this syndicated just in the paper in that town or did you have national distribution?*

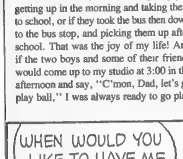
SPARKY: The editor said, "Why don't you draw this and bring it in once a week for the Sunday paper. We'll run it in the women's section in black and white." They started off running it three columns and after a few weeks they dropped it to two columns, so right away I got used to shrinkage. He said, "If you have them in here by Wednesday of each week that will be fine, and we'll just go from week to week, and we'll give you $10.00 for each page," so that's okay. That was my first regular cartoon outlet, which I did for about two years.

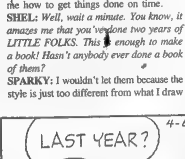
SHEL: *Two years?*

SPARKY: Yeah, and it was wonderful training for me because it taught me to work on a regular schedule. It taught me to develop characters and ideas, and taught me how to get things done on time.

SHEL: *Well, wait a minute. You know, it amazes me that you've done two years of LITTLE FOLKS. This is enough to make a book! Hasn't anybody ever done a book of them?*

SPARKY: I wouldn't let them because the style is just too different from what I draw





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"Now my lettering is kind of shaky."

now. I still have the whole collection. I pasted them all in a book.

SHEL: *And you feel they're your "children" and you don't wanna . . .*

SPARKY: Oh, I never like anything that I did yesterday. *(Laughter.)* Some of them are pretty good. I look at them and they were all right, but it was a growing process. Now, if you were to look at them you might regard them as rather immature, but they were all right for what they were. How I made my first submission to United Features was to take all of the best ones of these LITTLE FOLKS that I had done and redraw them and send them to United Features, and that was the submission which was finally bought.

Now in the meantime, this is something we forgot, the correspondence school had a system where they helped you to try to get work. I went around to different places and was always turned down because mainly it was for commercial art and I couldn't do commercial art. So one day I went over to a place where I was sent and it turned out to be a Catholic publishing company. All I had to show them was some comic strips and I was all set to be turned down again and say, "Well, okay. I knew I couldn't do this. All I wanna do is draw comic strips." Lo and behold a fellow looked at it, his name was **Roman Balte**, and he says, "I think maybe I've got something." He gave me what was really my first cartoon job. He gave me the job of lettering the stories that the other people in the studio were doing.

I could letter very fast. I eventually would letter the entire comic magazine in English, French and in Spanish — and at one time I think I even lettered it in Latin, I'm not sure. And for this he gave me $1.50 an hour — I was just to submit my time — and I was always very efficient. I learned very early that editors want people working for them who get things done well but get them done on time and are reliable. He would call me up during the day when I was working at Art Instruction. "Sparky, I've got some things here and I sure would like to have them by tomorrow morning." So I would drive then from Minneapolis all the way to downtown St. Paul — sometimes taking the streetcar if I didn't have my dad's car — pick up what he wanted, which he left outside the door, and then go over to Art Instruction for the day. Now, this to me was not a hardship. This, to me, was working. I enjoyed it thoroughly, and I could letter very fast. I got so that I could letter without even pencilling in or using guidelines.

SHEL: *That's why you don't need a lettering man.*

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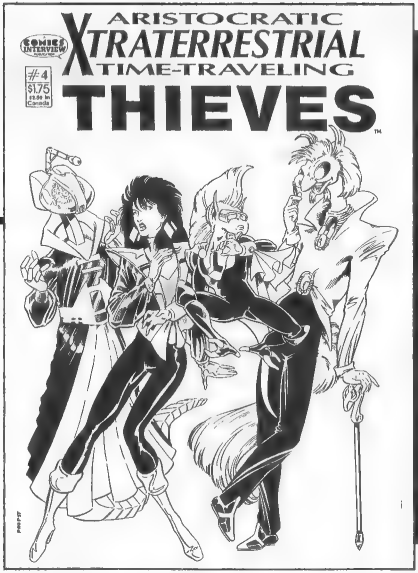

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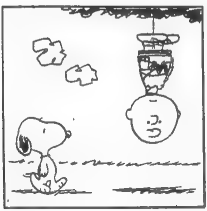
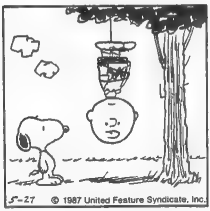
"I never test ideas on anyone else."





SPARKY: That's why I never needed a lettering man. Now my lettering is kind of shaky because I am now 63 years old, but that was very important to me. One day I had done a special fast job for him and as a reward he let me draw a four-page story which had something to do with some soldiers or something, and then he actually let me do two pages of humor cartoons and some of them were little kids After they printed two of them, for which I think I got $20.00 a page, he then said that the priest who was running the outfit didn't care for those, so that was the end of that.

SHEL: *After you connected with PEANUTS were you able to work at home?*

SPARKY: I tried working at home when we moved to Colorado Springs, right after I signed the contract, and I discovered that working at home for me was absolutely impossible. My mother-in-law visited us for awhile and she suggested it might be better if I would just rent a small room someplace downtown in Colorado Springs, which is what I did; and since then I have always worked away from home. Even when we moved out here to California — we had a large place, 28 acres — I still never worked in the house. I always worked away from the house. I don't know about others, but I just have decided that a man has to get up in the morning and go someplace. I think you have to go to a definite place where you do your work; and now Jeannie and I live alone in a very nice house about 20 minutes from here, and although I have a nice studio there I almost never use it. I find that I have to come to where I am sitting right now if I'm going to think of anything funny. I have to work in a pattern, which is why I work from 9:00 to . . . it used to be 9:00 to 5:00, lately it's been from 9:00 till 3:50. *(Laughter.)*

SHEL: *Then you work rather isolated and you always have, right?*

SPARKY: I don't know what you mean by . . .

SHEL: *A cartoonist works almost totally alone.*

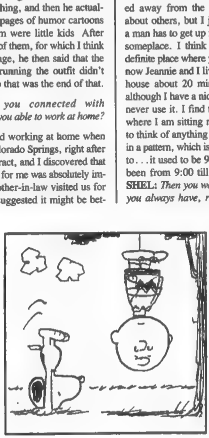
SPARKY: Oh, yeah.

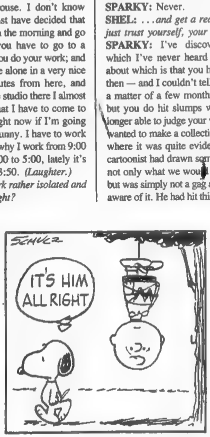
SHEL: *Was there somebody that you would bounce ideas off of . . .*

SPARKY: Never.

SHEL: *. . . and get a reaction, or do you just trust yourself, your own reaction?*

SPARKY: I've discovered something which I've never heard anyone else talk about which is that you hit every now and then — and I couldn't tell you whether it's a matter of a few months or what it is — but you do hit slumps where you are no longer able to judge your work. I have often wanted to make a collection of comic strips where it was quite evident to me that the cartoonist had drawn something which was not only what we would call "not funny" but was simply not a gag at all but he wasn't aware of it. He had hit this point in his work





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"But you do hit slumps where you are

schedule where he no longer was able to judge what he had done, whether or not it was funny. These are the little times that you have to beware of because it will happen to you and you don't know it. You look at something and you have no idea if it's funny or not. I just discard it then because I'm very fussy about what I put in. Within the last couple of years I've probably discarded more ideas than I had in the previous 33 years. But I never test ideas on anyone else. In the first place I don't think you can trust people because they want to be polite, and,I don't want to... It's *my* business! I draw 'em and send 'em in!

SHEL: *When PEANUTS first started it was used as a filler in a lot of papers. Wasn't that because the syndicate sort of had this request...there were a lot of page layouts where they needed some kind of filler and it was done so that the four panels could be stacked on each other or dropped in as a square or as a little strip — and this is the way it started? I've heard you speak about this before.*

SPARKY: Yes. It was sold initially, and advertised and promoted, as a space-saving strip because of the way you described it. It could be run vertically and just take up one column; two squares beneath the other two made up a two-column feature.

I've really had a bitterness about this down through the years, because I really think if the people who were in charge at that time were to admit it, it was because they didn't have that much confidence in it. They told me all of the time that, well, you know — "There's a newspaper shortage and we have to do something to help get a feature into a paper because editors are not willing to take on new features." But then why, about a year later it seemed — maybe a couple of years later, I'm not quite sure — why did they give "LONG SAM" to **Al Capp** and **Bob Lubbers** with *huge* panels? Why did they give the same amount of space to "TWIN EARTHS?" Neither one of them people can remember now. I defy you to have people remember them.

SHEL: *I remember them.*

SPARKY: Yeah, but I defy you to have the man on the street remember them.

SHEL: *They didn't last long.*

SPARKY: Well, no, and they were so bad. LONG SAM was all right, but TWIN EARTHS was a disaster. It was created, I think, by a committee. So this business of needing the space and everything is ridiculous, but I was stuck with it; and now when I hear cartoonists complaining about not having enough space — I've been drawing in the space of four airmail stamps for 35 years!

SHEL: *Was your style influenced by that?*

SPARKY: Oh, yeah, definitely. You see, my style was created partially from drawing for magazines like THE SATURDAY EVENING POST — I think cartoonists like **Mort Walker** and myself grew out of magazine cartooning, **Dick Cavalli** and all of the others — but I don't think that I would ever have drawn in the style that I'm drawing now if I had been given more space, but who knows. I don't know.

SHEL: *Well, let's talk for a minute about some of your favorites in the magazine gag cartooning area.*

SPARKY: I suppose **George Price** would tower above most of them.

SHEL: *Why?*

SPARKY: Because of the beautiful drawing. I don't know how THE NEW YORKER works with its humor — I don't know if these cartoonists think of their own ideas, I wouldn't have the slightest idea; I have heard that certain ideas are farmed out to certain cartoonists who seem to be able to do them better, but I don't know anything about it — but down through the years I think **George Price** would tower way up among all of the great ones. And then there is **Eldon Dedini**, of course, who still draws so beautifully; and now — what's his name? — **George Wolfe**, he's come along and introduced his own brand.

SHEL: *How about Gary Larson?*

SPARKY: Oh, **Gary Larson** is wonderful. I think if he had been born and started drawing 30 or 40 years before, then he would have been drawing for those magazines. He's fortunate that he was able to skip magazine cartooning and go right into syndication. No, he's wonderful. I can't believe how funny he is day after day.

SHEL: *Well then, Price's line is one of the things that you admire.*

SPARKY: Oh, yeah. The drawing is beautiful.

SHEL: *There's a real knowledge of structure, of good drawing, isn't there?*

SPARKY: Everything is drawn perfectly, whether it's a toaster or a chair or a dog or whatever. Every line is just right.

SHEL: *Do you remember a cartoonist named Sam Cobean?*

SPARKY: Very well. He was one of the great ones. **Cobean** had a lot of imitators, as all of the good ones eventually do.

SHEL: *Fontaine Fox?*

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no longer able to judge your work."

Photo: Shel Dorf

"I think cartoonists like Mort Walker and myself grew out of magazine cartooning." Mort (of BEETLE BAILEY fame), Sparky and Cathy Walker.

SPARKY: Fontaine Fox... He could draw beautifully. Yeah. And **McBride**, who drew NAPOLEON, a marvelous penline. Yeah. Beautiful things. There are very few good pen techniques left anymore, but how can you develop a pen technique when you've only got an inch-and-a-half in the newspaper?

SHEL: *Now, let us segue from that — this is a very natural segue — into some of the really amateur stuff that's being published today. I don't know, should we mention names?*

SPARKY: No, I won't. I don't want to talk 'em up.

SHEL: *But you and I both know who we're talking about, and we'll describe it as the "high school yearbook school of drawing," or maybe even the "grade school yearbook school of drawing." Do you have opinions about this stuff?*

SPARKY: Oh, yes, very strong opinions. It's a pity that some of these people never really had a chance to polish their craft before they got going.

SHEL: *But they're a success. They're in all of the papers. They're read every day.*

SPARKY: Is that success? *(Laughter.)* That's not success. Success is drawing something that makes people laugh; but there's a difference in draftsmanship which is what makes cartooning so wonderful, I suppose. You go back to **J. R. Williams'** OUT OUR WAY — he wasn't a great draftsman but his drawing is what I like to call effective, which is what **Frank King** was for GASOLINE ALLEY. His drawing was effective. **E. C. Segar's**, POPEYE — was POPEYE a well drawn strip? **James Thurber** couldn't draw at all.

SHEL: *Well, how about editors' tastes? Is this current crop of young editors more interested in the writing part than the art part?*

SPARKY: I think what they're interested in, probably, is not making a mistake. They're so afraid that they're going to miss something that is going to be a success that they all just grab onto these things. There seems to be no real proving ground for somebody to develop a good feature. There's no room for that. Now they're breaking down syndicate territorial rights and everybody seems to have the right to buy everyting. The competition in newspapers is gone. We're down to a one-newspaper town, so an editor doesn't buy a feature to promote his newspaper over the competition. So all of these things have entered into it.

SHEL: *What about the first time you really felt that you were a success? Now here, my God, you had a wife, five children — that's a great financial responsibility. Did your wife work? Did you come from a rich family?*

SPARKY: *(Laughter.)*

SHEL: *Most cartoonists don't make much money. How did you survive in the early days?*

SPARKY: Well, I didn't get married until I sold the PEANUTS strip. When I was working at Art Instruction I was making $65. a week, at the end and doing a little freelance work, so all-in-all I probably did not make as much as $100. a week — but after all what did I need money for? I just lived with my dad. It was just he and I, and my wants have always been relatively small. I just wanted to draw something that was decent. It was never drawn for money. Money was never a problem. I always thought I was making a lot of money, even though maybe I wasn't. I didn't know the difference. I had all that I wanted.

SHEL: *I can identify with that.*

SPARKY: Sure. PEANUTS was not an instant success. I labored along for a long while with only 45 papers. We started off with seven. I didn't think that I would ever get to 100. I remember reading about **Walt Kelly's** POGO when he made such a big hit with his first reprint book which came out in that small size and cost $1.00, and TIME magazine said that he had 80 newspapers. I thought, "80 newspapers!

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"In a good day I'll get 3 or 4 ideas."

How did he ever get 80 newspapers?" And I used to read about NANCY AND SLUGGO being in 400 newspapers, and LI'L ABNER, and I thought, "400! That's unbelievable!"

I think a combination of several things got us going. One of them was the cover on TIME magazine. I don't think I had 100 papers when TIME magazine put us on the cover. And then, of course, everything began to happen. Snoopy got up on his hind legs and began to walk around and he began to think thoughts which could be read, which I hadn't done initially. And then I did the whole pursuit of the Red Baron business, and then **Lee Mendelson** came along with the television shows, and — interestingly enough — none of these things was ever wanted when they first began.

SHEL: *Didn't that discourage you?*

SPARKY: No-no-no. Nothing ever discourages me. *(Laughter.)*

SHEL: *How come?*

SPARKY: Why should I be discouraged? I was doing what I wanted to do. I've never been discouraged by any of those things.

SHEL: *Then acceptance wasn't really a big part of your whole trip?*

SPARKY: I don't know what you mean.

SHEL: *Well, for instance, your strip was just as good with eight papers as it was with 100.*

SPARKY: Yeah.

SHEL: *What was happening outside your creative atmosphere didn't influence you one way or another?*

SPARKY: Oh, absolutely not. I just tried to draw the best thing that I could do.

SHEL: *I guess that probably saved your life, that attitude, because you had such an enormous success. Moneywise it's been said that you take home $15 million a year.*

SPARKY: (*Laughter.*) Really?

SHEL: *Yes. That kind of money would turn anybody's head around three times, and probably could have destroyed the desire to work if you were a different kind of person.*

SPARKY: I suppose.

SHEL: *How have you protected yourself from the effects of too much wealth?*

SPARKY: Well, an incident happened a few years ago when my daughters used to skate over at the arena which is a block-and-a-half from here. They would come over every day and stop by to say hello and visit and all that, and Amy came in one day and she was looking down at the strips and she said, "How far are you ahead now?" I said, "Well, I think these are about maybe two or three months ahead." And she said, "Dad, you're obsessed." *(Laughter.)* I can't explain it in any other way than that. I think I am more obsessed than some of my competitors. And I don't think drawing a comic strip is the greatest thing in the world.

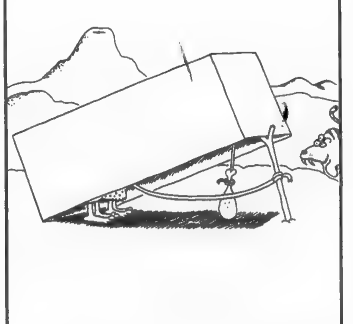
SHEL: *And you don't care about the grown-up toys that money can buy?*

SPARKY: No-no-no-no-no. That isn't part of it. I like to drive a Mercedes because they are reliable and I don't think it's gonna break down before I get home. That's the only reason I drive a Mercedes. I do remember that during the War and after I wanted to have a nice set of golf clubs because my initial set that I played with when I was on the high school golf team was a mixed set. None of the clubs ever cost more than, I think, $3.00 apiece. We could never buy new golf balls. The golf balls we played with were ones that we'd found. And so my ambition was to make enough money so that I could buy a nice set of golf clubs.

SHEL: *Sparky, we haven't talked at all about the actual mechanics of you drawing the strips. Could you just run through how that's done?*

SPARKY: Well, I use different types of scratchpads on which I doodle to create the ideas. Right now I've got several pads, the kind that attorneys have, those yellow pads, and I just sit — say on a Monday morning where I have no ideas at all and I'm starting a brand new week — the first thing that I do is look at the calendar to see when the strips are coming out in case I'm running into a holiday or something. Then I just sit there and I start doodling, trying to think of something funny, hoping that it will be a funny picture because I think that a lot of us forget that cartooning is still drawing funny pictures. It's not always dialogue. If I can come up with a funny picture then that's great, and I reach over to the left and I have the strips with the panels already printed on and I will pencil in the idea and rough in the dialogue in pencil and maybe letter it out. I don't finish up the strip because I know how long it will take me to complete the strip, so I set it aside on the desk and then I try to think of another idea. If I think of another idea I do the same thing. If it's going to be a good day then I'll get three or four ideas and I'll letter

"Gary Larson is wonderful. I can't believe how funny he is day after day."



"Shhhh, Zog! . . . Here come one now!"

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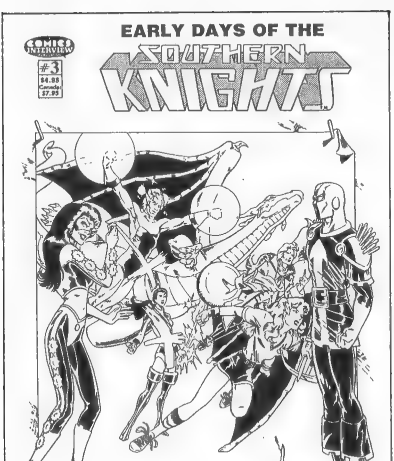

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"Writer's block is for amateurs."

them all in and maybe make a drawing here or a drawing there, and I might finish them up that day and I might not. I might wait until the next day hoping that I will think of a couple more ideas and finish up the week. If I can do six ideas in two days then I'm very happy. Then the next day I will try to do a Sunday page, which means then on Thursday I can start the dailys again. As **Milton Caniff** says, I'm always trying to lap myself. That's the idea. If it takes more than three days to do a batch of dailies then it's been too hard, the ideas haven't come up that easily.

But I don't worry about it. People always used to ask me about what they call writer's block. I say writer's block is for amateurs. Cartoonists are like professional actors. The curtain goes up and you step out on the stage and you do it. A cartoonist knows that the paper comes out every day, and so you do it.

SHEL: *Are there any dimensions in your characters that you're still discovering after 35 years?*

SPARKY: I think their personalities gradually change without your being aware of it. The personality of one character is sometimes taken over by another character. The most obvious example would probably be Charlie Brown and Linus. I think Charlie Brown initially was a lot like Linus is now. Charlie Brown, when the strip first started out, was not supposed to be the loser that he eventually became — and that really started with the recollection of a golfing incident which is a long story.

SHEL: *Well, I once asked you, couldn't Charlie Brown win at something?*

SPARKY: Never. *(Laughter.)*

SHEL: *You said the whole fabric would unravel.*

SPARKY: Sure.

SHEL: *Could you elaborate on that?*

SPARKY: Well, I think you establish a premise in whatever you are doing and you must never destroy that premise. Charlie Brown cannot win to any great extent. I suppose there could be a very brief incident of some kind and you could return to it, but probably the biggest mistake ever made in comic-strip history was Li'l Abner's marriage. The premise of the strip collapsed. He tried to return to it with the brother, which didn't work because the brother never had the appeal of Li'l Abner, and LI'L ABNER was one of the great comic strips of all time.

There's not much room in comic strips for drastic change. All you can do is try to improve a little bit each day, or try some new directions now and then, if you can then maybe introduce a new character — but not on purpose. I think new characters should come because of some idea that you have had — which prompts something which I don't think anybody has ever brought up before. I was talking to **George Pipal** who works here in my studio as a representative of United Features, and I said one thing which I've never heard told people who want to be cartoonists, which is that you really shouldn't start with a comic strip by thinking of the characters first. You should start trying to think of some funny ideas. Out of those funny ideas the characters will inevitably come. But most people don't want to do that. Most people want to draw 15 comic strips and send them to the syndicate and become rich and famous. I say draw 100 comic strips and throw 'em all away and start over again.

SHEL: *I saw somebody on the plane this morning — we took what Ron Silverstein calls the flying bus, a commuter plane of people going from Long Beach to San Francisco — actually open the paper and read PEANUTS, which is at the top of the page. That's the moment that this whole thing is built around, that one moment where somebody just reads it, scans it, smiles or whatever, and it's over. It's so brief.*

SPARKY: I know. *(Laughter.)*

SHEL: *When I first was aware of PEANUTS as something to reread a second and third time and enjoy it over and over again when the books started coming out. Can you sort of date the rise in popularity of the strips with the reprint books?*

SPARKY: Oh, I doubt it.

SHEL: *Because you were so subtle and so gentle, you sort of snuck up on us. This little*

Lucy, Snoopy and friends, including Chuck Green, Charles and Jeannie Schulz.

Photo: Shel Dorf

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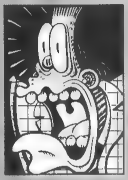
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three seconds that we had with you every day was a little amusing, gentle, or even a little cruel. To be with that world for just three seconds wasn't quite enough. To have a whole book and sit down in a chair and make the visit with the PEANUTS characters longer, to me that heightened the whole enjoyment of the strip.

SPARKY: Well, it's interesting, because there were book critics who said the strip is drawn to be enjoyed on a daily basis and not in one big form like a book, so no matter what you do somebody criticizes it.

SHEL: *Are there any problems in translating your humor into another language?*

SPARKY: Translation? I wouldn't have the slightest idea. I don't pay any attention to it because I think it's a problem which is beyond worrying. How can I decide whether or not someone in Japan is going to understand the strip and someone in Sweden might not? It's totally beyond me. I simply draw what I think is funny and if they like it great, if they understand it fine, if they don't, well maybe they shouldn't try to reproduce the strip in that country.

SHEL: *Have you ever been cancelled in a country because of the language barrier?*

SPARKY: No, that's been no problem at all. I think that England has run the strips about a year late for some strange reason I've never been able to find out. For a while I thought it might be because they were dropping a lot of the baseball strips which they didn't understand, but that's nonsense because the baseball strips are not drawn to relate only to people who understand baseball. They really don't have much to do with it.

SHEL: *You've got a new character called Tapioca Pudding, and I have a hunch there is a message there against merchandising, and if we think carefully you are the most successful merchandiser of a cartoon character that ever was — so how can you attack something that you, yourself, were responsible for?*

SPARKY: Because I'm attacking where it began. I never started out in merchandising. I started out drawing a good comic strip, and I created a group of good characters, and as the years progressed people came to us one by one — we never sought them out, we never sought out one single license. Everything came to us, from television to books to licensed products. It was always somebody who had an idea and came to us.

Nowadays the characters are created in a cold-blooded fashion by committee, and the comic strips and the action of the characters comes later. Well, usually there *is* no later because the characters die off after a couple of years because they have no life. You can't tell anything that Strawberry Shortcake or any of those characters have ever said. They are cold-blooded creations which have no real life. You see?

My licensing has been criticized down the years mainly, I think, through jealousy. I have heard cartoonists say that they would never have gotten involved in it. Well, they didn't get involved in it because they couldn't draw characters that were worthwhile to license. Even — well, forget it. I was about to mention a name, but I won't mention his name. You see, what is wrong with a plush Snoopy? What is wrong with having books with reprint cartoons in them? What is wrong with having Snoopy on the side of a lunchbox? Nothing is wrong with it until we get to the point where **Charles Schulz** got so big he hired 30 people to do his work for him while he was involved in licensing and went around the country making speeches. But **Charles Schulz** stayed home and drew the comic strip every day, thought of every idea, wrote every comic strip, and has never cheated the editor out of his initial agreement, which was to buy a comic strip which was the best thing that I can draw. So, you don't have to buy the books. You don't have to buy the lunchboxes or the sweathirts or anything like that. They are just there.

I am a contradiction. Nobody watches their merchandising more closely than I do, and yet on the other hand pays less attention to it than I do. I draw the comic strip. I draw the daily strip and the Sunday page.

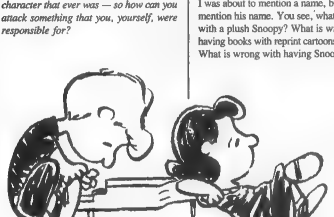
SHEL: *Did your children grow up with stuffed Snoopys?*

SPARKY: Oh, yeah. The kids liked all of the things, which was very gratifying; and they all had my original strips pinned to their walls and they had their favorites and they would ask me for originals for their friends, and this was always very gratifying.

SHEL: *Did they look at their father as a humorist?*

SPARKY: No. They didn't know what I was doing. *(Laughter.)* They really admit now that it took them until their middle-teens before they even realized that there was any fame involved at all.

SHEL: *You must have loved this because of the type of person you are — you just wanted them to accept you as Dad and not be kind of messed up as the children of a famous person?*



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"I don't think of myself as famous."

SPARKY: I never paid any attention to it. I don't think of myself as being famous. I don't think about those things. I don't think about being famous and successful.

SHEL: *Well now, Sparky, they don't ask just* anybody *to be the Grand Marshall of the Rose Parade and end up using your characters in outer space and things like that.*

SPARKY: Yeah, I know.

SHEL: *How did you feel when your characters went into outer space?*

SPARKY: Oh, that was great. I think that's one of the best things that's ever happened. Snoopy was the first character in comic-strip history literally to land on the moon! It wasn't just a story! No, he was there! And they brought back all sorts of beautiful little lapel pins which were given as safety awards to people on the assembly line. It was a wonderful thing, very flattering.

SHEL: *Hasn't this touched you?*

SPARKY: Oh, yeah. Some of the things have been wonderfully gratifying. But you can't let it be something that you think about all of the time because you still have to do your work. I think one of the most gratifying things that ever happened was the musical YOU'RE A GOOD MAN, CHARLIE BROWN. I used to go down to the Little Fox Theater in San Francisco now and then and watch the performances and just stand out in the lobby when the people came out afterwards and seeing families coming through the doors all smiling, knowing that they had seen something which was really fun and clean and decent and entertaining. That was really gratifying.

SHEL: *Did you write that?*

SPARKY: No, I didn't. I didn't have anything to do with it. They just took it from my books. I didn't even see the show for a year. It ran in New York for over a year and I had never even seen it.

SHEL: *But you approved the script?*

SPARKY: Never saw it. *(Laughter.)*

SHEL: *Who wrote that terrible contract for you?*

SPARKY: **Jim Hennessy**, and talk about a terrible contract, it is a terrible contract.

SHEL: *But it turned out to be a gold mine in terms of popularity. Local theatre groups and schools are reviving it all of the time. It's become a chestnut.*

SPARKY: It's the most performed musical in the history of the American theater.

SHEL: (Gasp!) *Is that true? Can you really say that?*

SPARKY: No doubt about it.

SHEL: *That's incredible! I thought it might have been OKLAHOMA or something like that!*

SPARKY: Well, people can't perform OKLAHOMA, you see. YOU'RE A GOOD MAN, CHARLIE BROWN can be done by every grade school, high school, college or church. All they need are six kids and some blocks. That's all.

SHEL: *That's true! (Laughter.) That's an incredible statement. Wow!*

Well, we got off on a tangent. I interrupted your train of thought on your merchandising.

SPARKY: Our licensing began so slowly, and it began with individuals coming to us with an idea for a project. Now, I may be wrong, but I think Ĵ was the first cartoonist who watched over this sort of thing by himself, and I did it only because I wanted to. I wanted the products to look

good. Now, there was no contract with United Features Syndicate that said I had the chance to do this, but I was on good terms with the business manager, **Jim Hennessy**, and he would call me when somebody would come with a product or something like that and I would get to see them in the initial stages. Mistakes were made and there were some bad things put out, and things that were very disappointing.

SHEL: *Can you name one?*

SPARKY: Oh, yeah. There was one that I was very disappointed with, it was a little Snoopy skating in one of these glass paperweights where you tip it over and it snows. I thought, "Boy, this is gonna be neat and I'll give 'em to all of my friends for Christmas!" The product was so poor and the box was so amateurish that I was really disappointed, and I really laid down the law at that time to the syndicate. "You've gotta watch these things more carefully!" Anyway, it's a very difficult thing to do and it has some enormous problems to it, if you're going to try to do quality.

But I think the turning point was **Connie Boucher** of Determined Productions. She came to me one day with the idea to do PEANUTS datebooks. Now if you go to your bookstore tonight you will see probably 50 different types of calendars. Now, we may not have started it, but we set the standard for those datebooks. **Connie Boucher** set the standard. She and **Jim Young**, who was her art director, used colors — that had never been done before — and she set the standard for licensing, I think, in our generation, and we have to give her credit for doing that. And, of course, later on she got the idea of doing the book HAPPINESS IS A WARM PUPPY.

SHEL: *That was a milestone.*

SPARKY: That was the #1 best-seller in 1963. And, of course, our first television show won a Peabody and it won an Emmy. And everything seemed so easy. But then we discovered that it's not so easy. *(Laughter.)*

SHEL: *Why?*

SPARKY: You don't win an Emmy every year. Sometimes they just ignore you completely. Sometimes you go down to the ceremony and they make the announcement that there was nothing in the animated category this year which was worthy of an award, and they don't even tell you.

SHEL: *How about BON VOYAGE, CHARLIE BROWN, AND DON'T COME BACK?*

SPARKY: That was kind of a disappointment.

SHEL: *I don't even like the title. I think it's terrible.*

SPARKY: I thought it was a great title, but the ending we were never able to resolve. It had some good scenes in it. I think the initial scenes, the airplane trip with Snoopy on the 747, was a lot of fun and all of that; but again, you see, this is a product which is the result of a lot of people working on it — and I don't get down to Hollywood as much as I should to at least see that my input is there. But I have good people to work with, and you just settled for a compromise.

SHEL: *One thing we haven't touched on*

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"I'm no longer an entertainer."

yet is all the public service work you've done. What has been the most fun for you?

SPARKY: I'm always willing to be the honorary chairman of any disease that I might get. *(Laughter.)* So I have been the Easter Seals chairman and the Kidney Foundation chairman and the Heart Association chairman and all of those things, and I see no reason why not. It's a simple thing to cooperate with these organizations, so I try to do all that I can.

I make almost no personal appearances anymore. No more speeches and things like that. I'm no longer an entertainer. Now and then for the right cause I might go out, but as far as being an after-dinner speaker just to make some program chairman happy, I've found myself alone on the highway at midnight driving home many times too many now to do that anymore. So I'm not an entertainer anymore. I used to go out and give chalktalks and draw the characters and try to make people laugh, but that doesn't interest me anymore so I just don't do it.

I remember my first autograph party, when the first book collection of PEANUTS came out: I was sitting at a table in Minneapolis and very few people were coming by and I was trying to keep busy by autographing books and setting them in a stack in case somebody came by to purchase one, and some were sitting on a counter next to me and two ladies came by. They were looking at different books. One of the ladies picked up the little PEANUTS reprint book, just took a brief glance at it, did not even bother to place it back on the stack but just kind of dropped it almost disdainfully on the table, and I sat there thinking, "Why do I have to put up with this?" *(Laughter.)* So I don't do autograph parties anymore.

SHEL: *What do you want for your future? More of the same? We're getting into an age where cartoons are being created by computer. How do you feel about that?*

SPARKY: I don't know anything about that. *(Pause.)* I was getting to the point last year sometime when I was thinking of quitting. I think about it quite often. Since my heart surgery my hands have never quite calmed down.

SHEL: *What does that mean?*

SPARKY: They shake. It makes drawing very difficult. I can't draw as fast as I used to be able to. I'm not as facile. I used to have a great penline, you know. I had a penline which I would match to Percy Crosby's anytime, but that was a long time ago.

SHEL: *So? Katherine Hepburn's voice quavers but she's still acting and we accept her and treasure her.*

SPARKY: Well, I still draw, so I've changed my mind. I haven't thought about quitting lately. We still have book projects to do. I'm still always interested in doing some new books. I think the book I came out with last Christmas, "YOU DON'T LOOK 35, CHARLIE BROWN," was a book unlike any that any other cartoonist had ever done. I think PEANUTS JUBILEE for our 25th anniversary was one of the most beautiful comic-strip books ever published, at least in this country. You know, Europe does much more beautiful books than we do over here. And then there's still television. I'm involved with a television project now which is going to be my CITIZEN KANE, I hope, if it all works out.

SHEL: *That's saying a lot.*

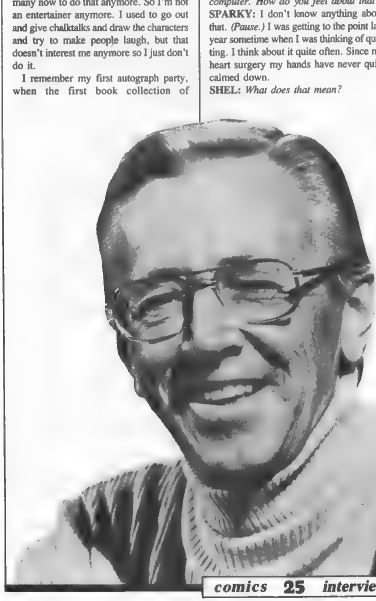
SPARKY: Yeah. And I think the television project which we did three years ago, "WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED, CHARLIE BROWN?," was something none of the other cartoon characters on television ever could have done, because they just don't have the right characters, and fortunately we do. Linus and Charlie Brown and Snoopy can do things that these other characters can't do. So those are the projects which interest me and keep me going.

SHEL: *Well, thank you so much for this golden time — what I call it, because I know how busy you are.*

SPARKY: You're welcome, Shel. I could talk about comic strips all day.

SHEL: *Me, too.*

SPARKY: We're obsessed, that's what we are, Shel. We're obsessed! *(Laughter.)*



"I was the first female cartoonist in

PHOTO Sandra Stanford

EASYRIDERS magazine — some claim!"

LYNN WILLIAMS

Ever wonder what the crazy cartoonists who do raunchy art are really like?

SHEL DORF: *I'm talking with Lynn Williams, the president of C.A.P.S., the Comic Art Professional Society. Lynn, let's get right down to the nitty gritty — how did a sweet, wholesome-looking girl like you get to have her work in PLAYGIRL magazine?*

LYNN WILLIAMS: I guess I have a dirty mind. I was the first female cartoonist in EASYRIDERS magazine, and that is — if you have seen the magazine — some accomplishment and a rather notorious claim to fame. *(Laughter.)*

SHEL: *It's kind of a biker's magazine?*

LYNN: It is. When I first started submitting to them both the editor and publisher were rather surprised that someone of my sexual persuasion could think up cartoons like that. However, I don't think I'm as dirty as some of their other cartoonists.

SHEL: *Do you mean dirty or do you mean raunchy?*

LYNN: Oh, you're right! Raunchy:

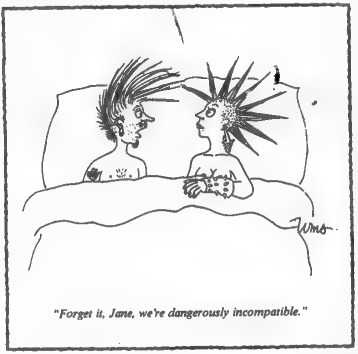
SHEL: *Well, I think it's delightful to know there's a raunchy side of you.*

LYNN: There's a raunch side to everyone. *(Laughter.)* But it seems as though my involvement in the past, and actually lately, has been magazines that are about the internal combustion engine: and I would certainly rather do something different once in awhile. For example, I'd like to get into fashion — however, fashion magazines don't usually have a cartoonist or a cartoon editor on the staff because fashion is actually a serious business, whereas motorcycles is a fun business. It's a leisure business.

SHEL: *Your cartoon style, how would you describe it?*

LYNN: It's a rather simple, linear style. My favorite cartoonist is **Lou Myers.** Even though I don't draw like him, he's basically the person that I admire most. He has a nice drippy, wet style — very childlike — very loose. I just love to look at it. I have a file of **Lou Myers** cartoons and ads.

SHEL: *To reach your style do you pencil first or do you just…*



"Forget it, Jane, we're dangerously incompatible."

"This is my third year with PLAY-

"Yes, once again it's time to play 'clitoral pursuit'!"

LYNN: I pencil first.
SHEL: *Are your pencils very tight?*

LYNN: No, my pencils are loose. Well, I found with the color, for example — the color cartoons in PLAYGIRL — I pencil much more tightly than the black-and-whites.

SHEL: *Does the editor at PLAYGIRL give you any requirements, or are the ideas all yours?*
LYNN: The ideas are all mine; however, each month the magazine will have a theme and they'll let me know what subjects to go after. Like, for example, December was the Christmas theme, maybe I would incorporate that into my cartoons. This is my third year with PLAYGIRL and I'm really happy with it.
SHEL: *How many other cartoonists submit to PLAYGIRL?*
LYNN: Quite a few, mostly from other parts of the country. I'm basically their only local cartoonist.

SHEL: *How much of a lead time does the magazine need?*
LYNN: They work three months ahead for the cartoons; however, I try to give myself a two-week lead time. What I do is at first I will contact them and tell them I will be bringing in some pencilled roughs. I give them nine to twelve rough ideas and then they select one for color and two for black-and-white — orginally it had been four black-and-whites.
SHEL: *So your sale is actually three cartoons at that time?*
LYNN: Yes. What has happened is I've had to think in a pressurized kind of time limitation. It's actually made me focus very well. You have to. If, however, they said, "You can do anything, any subject," I think I'd be lost. I like the limitation of the theme even if it's a tough one, and sometimes I have to go back with a few other roughs because maybe they didn't select three out of the first batch. That's frustrating, but I do it.
SHEL: *Let's go back a little bit. When did you first show an inclination toward cartooning?*
LYNN: Probably back in junior high. I always enjoyed drawing but…
SHEL: *Did you do it for the school yearbook?*
LYNN: Yes, as a matter of fact, in junior high I did — but a more realistic style. See, where I went to school, at the time, people would draw these little surfer cartoons — little drawings of guys with knobby knees and a surfboard and a dumb-looking face. I would always draw a different way.
SHEL: *How was yours different?*
LYNN: More realistic. A little more detail. A little more anatomically correct. No knobby knees. *(Laughter.)*
SHEL: *Did you draw the same type of cartoon, surfers and…*
LYNN: No. I always wanted to be different. What I usually tried to do was tackle something a little bit more difficult. For example, I did a drawing about the BEATLES. I drew them in a given square with lots of luggage to show that they were traveling all of the time, going to different gigs, and I had them in different positions. It was actually kind of a cute cartoon.
SHEL: *How extensive is your art training?*
LYNN: Well, I majored in art. I got my degree in art. When I was in high school I got a ten-week scholarship on Saturdays to Art Center College of Design. It was an anatomy class. We were put in the same class as the regular students, so it forced us to be competitive. It forced us to be good. And the instructor was wonderful.

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Lynn Williams
Born: Baltimore, Maryland
Occupation: Magazine Cartoonist/Designer
Credits: ADAM, LET'S CHEER, LOS ANGELES MAGAZINE, NEW WOMAN, THE VALLEY NEWS, PLAYGIRL, EASY-RIDERS, IRON HORSE, VENTURA COUNTY MAGAZINE
Organizations/Affiliations: President, CAPS (Comic Art Professional Society) 1985-1986
Favorite Cartoonists: Lou Myers; Gary Larson
Favorite Music: Rhythm & Blues, Jazz, Fusion
Formal Education: B.A. in Art
Favorite Movies: ANNIE HALL, MAGNIFICENT SEVEN, etc.
Favorite President: Thomas Jefferson
Most Admired Person: Beverly Sills
Going to a Space Colony, I'd take: Everything Raymond Chandler wrote, some Aretha Franklin tapes, a Scrabble game and a worthy Scrabble opponent
The World would be a Better Place if: People were required to read MISS MANNERS' GUIDE TO EXCRUCIATINGLY CORRECT BEHAVIOR

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GIRL and I'm quite happy with it."

PLAYGIRL FUNNIES

The POWER Lunch

- Pre-lunch preparation: Watch all the Joan Crawford films you can find.
- Sit facing the door. Bring a power cushion—she who sits taller has the edge.

A power lunch no-no. If you wanna eat with the big boys, learn to love Scotch (and check your umbrella at the door).

The only choice. Rare. Order spinach quiche when out with your mother.

* Power play: Order for your associate, perhaps a nice spinach quiche and a flaming mai-tai.

Cartoons by Lynn Williams

© 1986 Playgirl Magazine

Carol Lay's

GOOD GIRLS

"It had something to do with her hair..."
She's got the job
(love-lorn columnist for
a great metropolitan newspaper).
She's got the friends
(Ultra-Ma, Stupendo Boy).
She's got the costume
(covered with hearts, no less).
But she just can't fly!
She's Monica Saunders.
Ms. Lonelyhearts.
Oh, yeah.
She's got the hair,
too.

CAROL LAY
PSST! I LIKE YOUR HAIR! HOW WOULD YOU LIKE A JOB WRITING FOR A GREAT METROPOLITAN NEWSPAPER?
HUH? SURE!... WHICH ONE?
OH, BROTHER... HOW DID I GET MYSELF INTO THIS MESS?
IT HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH HER HAIR...

Find out why they're good.

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

© 1986 Carol Lay

"Sometimes it can be a grind."

He gave shortcuts then that I still apply now, with anatomy. How to draw a hand in an easy way, how to draw a foot — two tough parts of the body. And then I went to California State University at Northridge, in the Valley.

SHEL: *You're a genuine Valley Girl?*

LYNN: No, I was born in the East. *(Laughter)* I went there, supplemented my education by taking night classes, advertising classes, at Art Center.

SHEL: *What was your objective at this point?*

LYNN: I wanted to become an advertising art director.

SHEL: *Had you seen an advertising art director in action so that you knew what the job actually was?*

LYNN: Yes.

SHEL: *Why did you want to be one?*

LYNN: I have no idea. *No,* I like the idea of being able to...see, I liked the conceptualization. I liked *that* more than the actual drawing or writing. I like the thinking of it. I like the creation of it. After that it's easy. For example, thinking up the ideas for the PLAYGIRL cartoons, the roughs, that's the perspiration part; and that's the part I like, I find exciting, even though sometimes it can be a grind. Once they select them, then it's just a matter of drawing.

SHEL: *What are the requirements to be an art director?*

LYNN: Well, you have to have a good eye. You have to have a sense of proportion. You have to be fairly good with type. It's actually a team effort — working with the sales department, the account executives, the copywriter. I liked the idea of working one-to-one with a copywriter.

SHEL: *That involves thinking up slogans and...*

LYNN: Yeah, that kind of thing.

SHEL: *...describing the product in an appealing way, or maybe not even talking about the product but maybe talking about the people who use the product or something.*

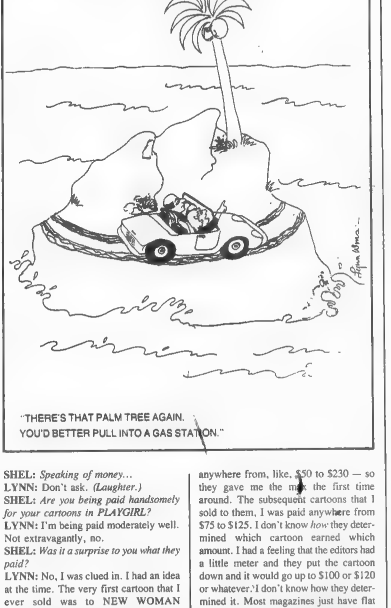
LYNN: There're different applications. But I got sidetracked. I never really did become an art director, *per se.*

SHEL: *How did you get sidetracked?*

LYNN: Well, I discovered cartoon and illustration instead, and I liked that. And also, there's a piece of me that likes to work at home. I like working in familiar surroundings. Being a cartoonist affords that flexibility

SHEL: *I've heard cartooning described as the only multi-million dollar career that you can do out of a spare bedroom.*

LYNN: Absolutely. That's true. You can do it in a closet if you have good lighting.



"THERE'S THAT PALM TREE AGAIN. YOU'D BETTER PULL INTO A GAS STATION."

SHEL: *Speaking of money...*

LYNN: Don't ask. *(Laughter.)*

SHEL: *Are you being paid handsomely for your cartoons in PLAYGIRL?*

LYNN: I'm being paid moderately well. Not extravagantly, no.

SHEL: *Was it a surprise to you what they paid?*

LYNN: No, I was clued in. I had an idea at the time. The very first cartoon that I ever sold was to NEW WOMAN magazine, back in 1975. I had submitted a batch of ten cartoons and about a month later I got a little letter in the mail, it turned out to be a check for $230. So I looked at this and I said, "This is easy. If they pay this for a black-and-white, my God, I can just sit and draw cartoons all day!" Of course, there was a rude awakenung because they don't pay $230 per cartoon each time. Each magazine has their own payscale. As it turned out, at the time, in the mid '70s, NEW WOMAN had a very interesting pay pattern. They would pay anywhere from, like, $50 to $230 — so they gave me the most the first time around. The subsequent cartoons that I sold to them, I was paid anywhere from $75 to $125. I don't know *how* they determined which cartoon earned which amount. I had a feeling that the editors had a little meter and they put the cartoon down and it would go up to $100 or $120 or whatever.'I don't know how they determined it. Most magazines just have flat rates unless you can negotiate with them for more.

SHEL: *Now, is the whole point of the thing if it's funny or not? If it strikes the editor funny or not?*

LYNN: It's very arbitrary. However, the concept, the idea — the caption — carries more weight than the drawing. The cartoon can be beautifully drawn but if it doesn't have any substance behind it then they won't buy it. What they'll say is, "We like your drawing, send more cartoons to us." However, let's say you do

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"Now I can be funny and naughty."

a scrawly drawing such as...I can't remember his name but there's a NEW YORKER cartoonist who just does a scrawl, and he's very funny because his cartoon captions are so wonderful.

SHEL: *Well, getting back to your early days when you changed career objectives, did your family and friends tell you how funny you were as a cartoonist, or your teachers or anybody?*

LYNN: Yeah. They encouraged me. **Eric Teitelbaum** taught a class at UCLA in cartooning. He said I had a very marketable style. This was before I had started submitting work. The year I started submitting work was 1975. Within six months I had sold my first cartoon. Eric was very happy for me. He was very excited for me. And then I won a cartooning contest through THE DAILY NEWS. When THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE bought out THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY DAILY NEWS the publishers and the editors decided they wanted more cartoons and so they had a calling-all-cartoonists kind of thing. I called them up and asked if it was okay if professionals submit and they said it was open to everyone. So I drove down there with about five cartoons, and I drove home and got this call, they said, "Well, we don't know if you won but we'd like to buy them." So, before I knew that I won, which was a few days later, they had already bought some of my cartoons! *(Laughter.)*

SHEL: *That's very exciting! How many entries were there?*

LYNN: I don't know. I have no idea. There were two categories, single-panel and multi-panel. I won single-panel. Part of the prize, aside from a small cash prize, I had a weekly cartoon appear in one of their Sunday sections.

SHEL: *Was this your first steady assignment?*

LYNN: Yeah, but they made it easy for me. I could do anything I wanted, so that was fun. I did that for over a year.

SHEL: *That's great. I think getting your work published really adds the impetus to...*

LYNN: If there's ever a competition then I would suggest enter just to be seen. You never know who's looking at the cartoons in the offices. You're totally at the whim of the editors, and if you hit somebody's funnybone you're in. You have to try.

SHEL: *Do you have any desire to do a comic strip?*

LYNN: I submitted one once, and admittedly it wasn't very good.

SHEL: *It seems to me it's harder to create a joke in one panel than it is to stretch it on to three.*

LYNN: I always felt I could say what I needed to say or draw what was needed in one visual. Then I look at strips like CATHY or BROOMHILDA and I see how lovely it is to have more than one image per day.

SHEL: *Or you could do what Brad Anderson does with MARMADUKE and have a daily panel and then a Sunday page.*

LYNN: Yeah, but I don't really have any plans at the moment, or any ideas at the moment, for submitting a syndicated strip — but you never know.

SHEL: *Do you have any particular characters that you've created, or is it just a bunch of funny drawings?*

LYNN: Originally, when I first started submitting work to NEW WOMAN and they kept buying...of course, the demographics of NEW WOMAN at the time was a feminist kind of magazine, with cartoons...

SHEL: *They had to be crusading types?*

LYNN: No, more like role reversal, like a woman doctor and a male patient, or a woman professor and a male student.

SHEL: *It sounds like there would be plenty of opportunities for stuff like that.*

LYNN: Well, what happened was for awhile people were looking at me — I was getting to be known as a women's cartoonist, and I guess it stuck because I'm in PLAYGIRL now. What I couldn't do in NEW WOMAN I can do in PLAYGIRL. I can be funny and naughty. *(Laughter.)*

SHEL: *Do your male friends feel a little uneasy picking up a copy of PLAYGIRL and looking at your cartoons?*

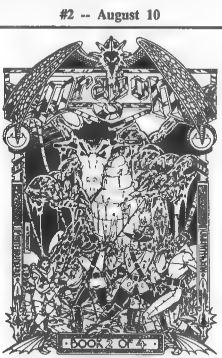
LYNN: Well, some of them do. A few weeks ago when I went to visit my doctor for my yearly check-up and he said, "I have great courage." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I was in the bookstore looking at PLAYGIRL. My wife was giving me strange looks, but I wanted to see your cartoons." And I said, "You know, I'm really proud of you." *(Laughter.)*

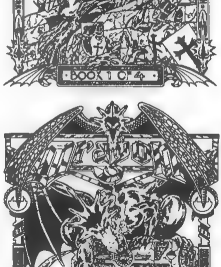
PHOTO: Shel Dorf

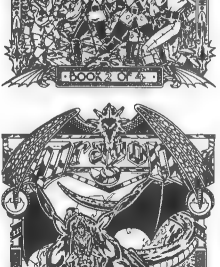
DRAGON WEEKLY
4-ISSUE MINI-SERIES!

#1 -- August 3

#2 -- August 10







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"I did f/x on the STAR TREK movie."

DARRELL

McNEIL

This guy is crazy! When animator Darrell McNeil found out that a representative from his favorite media magazine was stalking the environs of Bruce Schwartz's monthly Ambassador Hotel Comic Con, he locked onto me. As I talked to him, I found Darrell to be very much like a living animated cartoon character, himself. Wandering away from the Con, we gravitated towards the fabled Brown Derby, hoping to take a few "gag" photos. To our mutual surprise, we found that the Derby — which was in the process of being relocated — had no door. Seized by an insane impulse, McNeil and I bolted in and conducted our interview in the ruins of this popular culture icon. What follows is a tightening up of what seemed on tape to be the sound track of a Daffy Duck cartoon. If you listen close enough, however, you will find that Darrell has a lot to say and that beneath the Ambush Bug-like rap is the voice of a startlingly intelligent and committed young man...

KEN JONES: *Tell us about being a freelance animator.*

DARRELL McNEIL: Well, I've worked on a lot of shows. There is one that a lot of black people remember with great regret, called RICKETY ROCKET, featuring the world's only black rocket ship. I was working at Ruby-Spears at the time, in the layout department, but I also had a second job as vice-president for RICKETY ROCKET, in charge of lawsuits from the N.A.A.C.P. because we kept getting notes from the cen-

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Darrell McNeil

Born: Yes! 26 November 1957 — Los Angeles, CA

Credits: NEW SPACE GHOST, HERCULOIDS — new —, PLASTIC MAN, old SHAZAM, KIDD VIDEO, HEATHCLIFF, SUPERFRIENDS, HULK HOGAN'S ROCK N' WRESTLING, YOGI'S SPACERACE, GALAXY GOOFUPS, TREASURE HUNT, SCOOBY DOO, THE THING, THE SUPER-GLOBETROTTERS, TARZAN AND THE SUPER-SEVEN, FABULOUS FUNNIES and a host of others.

Favorite Comics: TEEN TITANS, SWAMP THING, CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS, NEXUS, AMERICAN FLAGG

Favorite Soap Opera: EDGE OF NIGHT

Favorite Cartoon: ROCKY AND BULLWINKLE

Influences: SUPERFRIENDS, old SPACE GHOST, JOSIE AND THE PUSSYCATS, Max Fleischer's SUPERMAN, the ARCHIE'S SHOW

Words To Live By: "Every time they know the answers I change the questions." — Rowdy Roddy Piper.

"Anybody could have . . . except maybe Shooter."

sors that said, "Get rid of the lips." And we'd say, "No, they're bumpers." But, hey, the thing had teeth, and an Afro that looked better than mine! That was when I was a staff artist.

I started out in 1977, at Hanna-Barbera, working as an in-betweener on SUPERFRIENDS, my favorite show. Then I worked on DYNAMUTT, a "Limp-O-Laughics." It was really called Laugh-O-Lympics — but if you saw it you'll know that "Limp-O-Laughics" is more appropriate. Back then, you could really have a lot of fun. I was working in-house there, worked in-house at Filmation and Ruby Spears.

Then I did a stint working on the first STAR TREK movie, doing special effects. God, what a picture that was! STAR TREK, the Motion Sickness classic, for sure. Then I became freelance. Those were the days when you could work in-house at a studio and it wasn't as bureaucratic as they are now. You could have fun in those places, like Hanna-Barbera. For example, I was working on SUPERFRIENDS, back when Mego first brought out the super-hero dolls. So I had my super-hero dolls — Batman, Superman, Aquaman, Robin, and Wonder Woman. We had our share of practical jokers in those days. When I would go out to lunch, they would take those rubber erasers and put them on Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman in various odd positions. That wasn't bad enough, but **Art Skyles**, producer at the studio at that time, would come through bringing a bunch of kids on tour. They would go by my desk and see Batman doing these things to Wonder Woman that we didn't show on the TV show and **Skyles** would call my name and I'd say, "I guess I don't work here any more," and **Skyles** would say, "Damn straight you don't."

A lot of people make comments about the fact that Saturday morning cartoons are junk, but there was a story that came out in late 1977 about this girl who saved her friend's life by applying the Hymlick maneuver when she was choking. She'd got the information on how to do this from watching a SUPERFRIENDS cartoon. I was an animator on that particular sequence and I was proud to be involved with something that saved a kid's life. I am a collector. People who know me know that I have one of the largest model sheet collections in the world today.

KEN: *What else do you collect?*

DARRELL: Certain types of fungi, most brands of cockroaches, menus from Jack-in-the-Box. I am into comic books. I have twelve thousand — give or take a dozen. I collect most of the DCs, a couple of Marvels I got blackmailed into buying. I'll give you an example. I bought SECRET WARS. How many people will admit that? I made a bet with a friend that I would not only buy every issue, but would actually read them!

KEN: *Tell us about your favorite comic books.*

DARRELL: NEW TEEN TITANS, NEXUS, SWAMP THING, AMBUSH BUG. I liked seeing Egg Fu and Ace the Bat-Hound. I was going to write a treatment for an Ace the Bat-Hound graphic novel and an Egg Fu mini-series.

KEN: *Tell me about all the super-hero related animation projects you've done, like Plastic Man . . .*

DARRELL: I wanted to do that show badly. As far as SUPERFRIENDS, I was a big continuity maven. We were doing things with Green Lantern where he had a plane. As if that weren't bad enough, it was green and yellow! I bugged the writer **Jeff Scott** a hell of a lot and he actually listened to stuff I told him. SPACE GHOST is a subject that is close to my heart. I wanted to get into comic books every since I was a kid. I had my comic-book company, called Gold Medal Comics. I had my own super hero, called Quick-Quick, at four years old. Anybody could have drawn Quick-Quick except maybe **Jim Shooter**. Getting back to Space Ghost, when I was nine years old, I was in the Screen Extras Guild. I wanted to animate SPACE GHOST so my grandmother took me up with my sketches and the receptionist said, "These are nice — come back in about ten years." When I went back, ten years later, and started work for Hanna- Barbera, she was still there — and she couldn't believe that I came back. I worked on SPACE GHOST for subwages, but **Jack Kirby** was working on it, and it was great being able to work off of his riffs.

KEN: *Let's talk about Hulk Hogan's Rock'n'Wrestling.*

DARRELL: I am a wrestling buff — I watch it all the time. I wrestle with my girl friends. Wrestling is my life. Wrestling is really big now. Someone called it, "DYNASTY with sweat." The stuff is all script-

Darrell pencilled & Larry Houston inked this rendition of Space Ghost — a lifelong animated dream-come-true of Darrell's.

© 1985 Hanna-Barbera

"Batman doing these things to Wonder Woman"

© 1985 Hanna-Barbera

ed and choreographed and you know who's going to win and lose most of the time. Wrestling is like theater. It's like living comic books right in front of you. It's good vs. evil. I am doing layouts for HULK HOGAN.

KEN: *What else are you doing?*

DARRELL: I am also doing layouts for YOGI'S TREASURE HUNT, which basically involves Yogi Bear and as many other Hanna-Barbera funny animals as they can bring back from the dead. This week, I may also be doing storyboards for a new series from **Disney** called the WUZZLES. **Disney's** getting into Saturday morning animation. They're doing two series, the WUZZLES and the GUMMI BEARS.

KEN: *I've heard you're a fan of the Max Fleischer Superman cartoons?*

DARRELL: When I was a kid, the thing for me was SPACE GHOST, then it was JONNY QUEST, then it was **Max Fleischer's** SUPERMAN cartoons. I'd like to do a feature like that myself today. I've got the script and characters — all I need is fifty million dollars. *(Laughter.)* Those are gorgeous classics of full animation. I used to know **Bob Clampett** and Bob showed me a six-minute sequence he'd planned to use for JOHN CARTER OF MARS back in 1937. A lot of people talk about **Disney** as animation's end-all and be-all. I like **Disney** — SNOW WHITE's my favorite, because I am into rotoscoping. **Bashki** was bad rotoscoping, but **Fleischer,** like **Disney,** had good rotoscoping. And action pacing. It had timing.

People tell me how great Japanese animation is. Give me a break! There's a Japanese animation show out now called TURBO TEEN. Nobody I know above the age of twelve likes that show. I don't care for Japanese animation. I was raised on Hanna-Barbera, Disney, Filmation, — like JONNY QUEST. I've met **Doug Wildey;** him and **Stan Lee** are cut from the same cloth, except Stan says "Excelsior" more.

Americans animate on "2/5" — in other words, the camera shoots two drawings for each frame of animation. I could explain this better, but I am awed by being here in the Brown Derby. Japanese animators animate on "3/5". They do less animation per half hour than we do. They can do things with giant robots and big machines that we can't, because they do a simpler kind of animation. American products such as the SMURFS and SUPERFRIENDS don't have as much technical stuff in them, but they have a certain fluid appeal to them that I can get into. Remember when they put MIGHTY ORBOTS against the SMURFS? SMURFS is beginning its fifth season, while ORBOTS said, "Sayanara." But, seriously, ORBOTS was about as good as Japanese animation is ever going to get, and they had help from some former **Don Bluth** animators. The Japanese just don't know how to animate the human figure in motion.

KEN: *Let's talk about comic-book people who are in the animation industry.*

DARRELL: Jack Kirby's worked at Ruby-Spears and **Gil Kane's** working there right now. **Will Meugniot** started in animation, and bounced back and forth to comics, finally landing in animation because the money was so good. I heard that there was a seminar at a C.A.P.S. meeting that **Mark Evanier** hosted. **Sharman DiVono** was there. Mark was there and several people who work in animation *and* comics were there — and they said if they didn't work in animation, too, they couldn't survive! Now you got your **John Byrnes** and **Chris Claremonts** who make a fortune — but they're the rare exceptions.

KEN: *Let's talk comic books.*

DARRELL: The TEEN TITANS, they're my favorite. I've always been a DC man. When I was a kid I was into SUPERMAN and THE JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA. I liked **Mike Sekowsky** back then and still do. FLASH, GREEN LAN-

"Most of the Marvel books are terrible."

© 1985 DC Comics, Inc.

TERN, I loved **Infantino, Kane, Sekowsky, Neal Adams** when he came in later. DC is my company. DC's my favorite company — they do good work. You've got the TITANS, one of the overall best books on the stands right now. It'd be better if **George Perez** got back on it. I am always pushing DC, especially after that masterpiece of cinematic comic-book storytelling known affectionately as MARVAL SUPER HEROES THE SECRET WARS. I think that DC has been more of the innovator in the business. They treat their people better over there. At Marvel, **Shooter** runs a shop — he wants a house style. Most of the Marvel books are terrible. Some of the books do break out — like **Miller** when he was on DAREDEVIL or **Sienkiewicz** on NEW MUTANTS. I mean, heck, you couldn't understand the stories, but they were fun to look at. If you're going to talk about originality in comic books, then let's face it — you've got Superman, a costumed character who flies around in a cape with super powers; Batman doesn't have powers, but wears a cape and a mask. Once you've got them, you've got it all — so you've got to find the twist that makes them different. I love DC books I see today, the TITANS, AMBUSH BUG, SWAMP THING, OUTSIDERS I like a lot. X-MEN just doesn't have any life to it. It's all death. It's all butch women hanging out with men and how many times can we bring Dark Phoenix back? TITANS stands head and shoulders above all the other super-hero books, because the TITANS are exactly like real-life teenagers. Cyborg is a member of the SUPER POWERS show this year. In fact, the show is not called SUPERFRIENDS anymore. It's called SUPER POWERS,

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"Kirby received more money for the use of Darkseid than he did for all his work at Marvel."

because of the Super Powers toys. Cyborg's a member, Dr. Fate, and Martian Manhunter, too. **Kirby** received more money for the use of Darkseid than he did for all his work for Marvel, which I think is just great! The guy deserves it. Jack's one of the best concept-men in the business. The guy has ideas and he knows how to take those ideas and make them work. **Kirby** is the inspiration behind **Lucas's** STAR WARS. Jack created Darkseid, the ultimate dark villain and it's weird — one of the reasons DC gave for canceling NEW GODS back in '71 was that it was unmerchandisable. Well, boy, they're merchandising the heck out of it now! The Darkseid figure is out. There will be a Darkseid Halloween costume. He's a regular on the SUPER POWERS show. SUPER POWERS sells well because it's a comic book for young kids. You'll have lines in there like Aquaman saying, "Great Halibut," but it'll help young kids that like the TV show get into it. SQUADRON SUPREME was one of the few good Marvel books coming out recently — if only it wasn't a rip off of the JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA! That's what really tweaks me about Marvel. Marvel has gotten after a friend of mine whom we shall call Alamo — he knows why — because they said he created something that sounded too close to something that they created or might want to create sometime in the future. The MARVEL UNIVERSE HANDBOOK should be called the MARVEL TRADEMARK BOOK. Alamo had a concept he worked up, called Anthill Blues, which was like HILL ST. BLUES with ants. You know what the Marvel lawyers said? "You can't do that — it's too close to Ant-Man!" I mean, that's Marvel. "Let's grab it all, own it all, drain it all!" It's funny hearing Marvel employees defend themselves with a straight face! As a friend of mine said, "If you had to defend SECRET WARS, how would *you* feel?" Let's get off this. Give me a pleasant topic to talk about.

KEN: *Which comic-book characters would you like to see in animation?*

DARRELL: I'd love to do the TITANS, if they weren't already optioned. I'd love to do the LEGION. I'd love to do B'wana Beast. I like B'wana Beast! In fact, the WUZZLES are combination animals. There's a Rhinokey, which is a rhino and a donkey, a bumble-lion which is a bumblebee and a lion. We're doing things in the WUZZLES the B'wana Beast pioneered twenty years ago. I do have my own company. We haven't done anything yet, but I do have a show that might be a "go" and, if it does, it'll be the JONNY QUEST of the 1980s. It'll be me doing that kind of character. What I want to do is the type of super heroes that are being done in comic books now and translate them to television. I have my own characters and concepts. I am talking to a toy company back East right now about doing action figures based on my super heroes. If we do a series on them in '87, I want to do super heroes as real people. I mean, animation is what I want to do. I am proud of it. I want to bring comic-book people into my company and let them do what they want to do.

KEN: *Any last thoughts?*

DARRELL: Let's get the hell out of the Brown Derby before we get arrested for trespassing!

© 1978 Hanna-Barbera

"Now you've got 14,000 colors — and the trick is to pick the best ones!"

PAUL TALLER-DAY & BARBARA MARKER

A comic book is the product of a writer, artist, letterer, editor and publisher, right? Wrong. *This list neglects the anonymous army of production artists who often sweat and bleed over the book as much or more than the superstars. What exactly is a production artist? In this absolutely astounding interview with peerless production ace Paul Tallerday, and colorist Barbara Masker, you'll find out.*

SHEL DORF: *How long have you been in this line of work?*

PAUL TALLERDAY: In graphics, about ten years. In comics-related graphics, a little over two years.

SHEL: *Let's go back — whereabouts was Pacific Comics when you joined the firm?*

PAUL: They were just about to come out with their first comic — CAPTAIN VICTORY. Not their very first, their very first was black-and-white, this was their first color comic.

SHEL: *CAPTAIN VICTORY was done by* **Jack Kirby**. What was your part in the project?

PAUL: I started with simple production,

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Paul Tallerday
Born: Davenport, Iowa
Residence: San Diego, CA
Occupation: Production Coordinator and Associate Art Director for Blackthorne Publishing, Inc.
Credits: Production Coordinator for Blackthorne Publishing, Inc. and formerly Production Coordinator for Pacific Comics. Penciled covers for Blackthorne's *Stories of the West* trade paperback series. Inked several of Blackthorne's trade paperback covers and colored many covers for Pacific comics and Blackthorne Publishing.
Favorite Artists: Those who use rulers, non-repro blue, and close their inked lines.

Name: Barbara Masker
Born: Bavarian Alps in Germany. Grew-up in Elmira, New York.
Residence: San Diego, CA
Occupation: Artist. Primarily colors covers using gray-line method. Also does inking and graphic arts.
Education: St. Ambrose College, San Diego Academy of Fine Arts, and San Diego City College plus numerous art courses.
Credits: Colored (mostly painted) over 70 book covers for Pacific Comics and Blackthorne Publishing, Inc. Inked several covers for Blackthorne.
Hobbies: Roller-skating, working out, drawing and painting.

"We devised a collage system, with photos."

© 1982 Jack Kirby

somebody's gotta put the page numbers on! As time went on, I got more and more involved with different aspects, to the point where I oversaw an awful lot of the projects.

SHEL: *What exactly are the skills of production work?*

PAUL: Typesetting, camera work, paste-up, layout, design, color balance . . .

SHEL: *All the necessary steps after the artist hands you the finished originals — the man between the artist and the final printing?*

PAUL: Right, we take the original artwork and make it so that it can be printed, so that it looks like a book.

SHEL: *Can these things be learned in school, or is it mostly information that you pick up?*

PAUL: Mostly, it's on-the-job training, it comes from a tradition of apprenticeships and journeymen in the old crafts. There are some schools now that try to teach the different skills involved — actual hands-on production skills, typesetting, being able to paste up and ink, rather than the design and layout parts which have been taught for some time already.

SHEL: *Were you the only production person in Pacific's new art department?*

PAUL: Yes, when I went to work there it was an empty room, with just one table. I worked by myself for about six months, then we added an artist, and more and more people as the company grew.

SHEL: *Was the typesetting done by computer?*

PAUL: Yes, right.

SHEL: *How's that done?*

PAUL: Well, you have a computer terminal attached to a typewriter-like keyboard, and the type is set photographically from the keyboard. The paper comes out in one long roll, which can be up to 150 feet long.

SHEL: *How did you do color balancing?*

PAUL: Basically the colorist determines the relationship, either as a guide, or with the full-color comics such as CAPTAIN VICTORY, directly. If the colorist is good it's difficult to mess those relationships up. In other words, if you have a good artist the finished piece'll look pretty good regardllyess of how bad the printing is. Of course, there are limits to that. There are some speciic problems as far as printing comic books — type of equipment, paper.

SHEL: *The color would change if printed on different paper?*

PAUL: Certainly. Different paper, different press, different inks.

SHEL: *We're lucky to have a colorist sitting right next to you.*

VOICE: *(Laughter.)*

SHEL: *Your good friend Barbara Marker. Can you tell us how you approach coloring a comic-book page? You do not color the original art itself —*

BARBARA MARKER: Usually, I get either a grayline — which Pacific Comics came up with, I think — or else we used straight see-through mylar, working with marker or cel vinyl paints. We devised a collage system, where we actually worked with photographs and printed colors. We'd have a lot of long talks about the kinds of inks that are used on the press, as opposed to the colors that the actual colorist would use. When you deal with the press you deal with cyan, magenta and yellow, and even the type of yellow they use can vary the reproduction you get.

SHEL: *An overlay of blue plus the yellow would give you a certain kind of green?*

BARBARA: A lot of coloring artists complain about the kind of browns they get, or maybe the reds, because they're dealing with cyan, magenta and yellow, which means that the magenta gives a purple-based red, as opposed to an orange-based red.

PAUL: There are two major ways color is reproduced: the traditional method, or mechanical color — where the colorist colors a xerox of the original pages, and defines the colors by screen tints which are patterns of the four process colors. Everything printed is only printed in four colors.

SHEL: *In shades created by the little dots that you see if you look very close.*

PAUL: Right. After the colorist does this guide, then it is sent to a stripper — someone who converts these colors into either patterns painted on clear film, or cut out of opaque material that creates windows allowing this color to be made. This is basically the mechanical system. The col-

"In fact, color is an illusion. . ."

ors are manufactured mechanically — let's say a 30% screen of one color mixed with a 60% screen of another, to get a specific hue.

The other system is to photogrphically separate it into its four-color components — a whole different ball of wax. There's no person cutting the color, creating these little windows, it's all done photographically.

SHEL: *Does the camera see it exactly as the colors are?*

PAUL: No. In fact, color is an illusion, anyway — everyone sees color a little differently, depending on who you are and where you grew up, what color light you're looking at the color in.

SHEL: *Where you grew up?*

PAUL: People who are strippers, who do color separations, do it to exacting photographic standards. If you grew up in California and you moved back east, they get complaints that all of their greens are too brown, and all their colors aren't quite bright enough. Just the opposite happens from a person who grew up back east and came to California — their colors are too green, too intense. It has a lot to do with where you were raised.

Also, there are only four inks used to create the colors, namely cyan, which is a greenish blue, magneta, which is a purplish red, and yellow, and black, to get the shadow density. You can't make every color out of these, a lot of colors simply aren't reproducible out of these four.

BARBARA: That's why an artist may complain after the pages come off the press. They never exactly resemble what he sees in his mind, unless his mind works strictly with cyan, magneta and yellow. We did a cover for VANGUARD #7, mostly collage — I painted in the eyes, but the rest was collage — and it reproduced really well, because it was from colors that had already been printed.

PAUL: See, all we used was cyan, magneta, yellow and black, so the reproducjtion was almost perfect. Whereas, an artist who uses turquoises, oranges and browns always complains that his color shifts. If you changed the process colors to pick up the turquoises, oranges and browns, the rest of the colors would shift, flesh tones would be difficult.

BARBARA: The interesting thing is that if the original colors work well together and the shadings vary, that even when they're printed, unless the job is done really terribly — too much ink all over the place or something — the nuances are there, even if the entire color shifts in the spectrum.

PAUL: If the colorist is good, and the relationships between the colors are good, it'll stand up regardless of how much shifting goes on. It's the *relationship* among colors that causes a piece to work or not work, not always the specific hue, although on occasion that's important, too.

SHEL: *How much creativity does the printer have?*

PAUL: He's not supposed to have *any*, of course! There are — not used in comics — things known as closed systems, where the printer is held to densetometer values on a specific color bar. Most of 'em hate to work under that situation. There is some creativity, amounting to a publisher sending a representative, unless he has a working relationship with the printer over a long period of time, where they okay one piece off the press.

There are cases where the original artist checks the press color. You have to know a lot of technical background to be able to know what's possible to change and what's not. Once you get one sheet off that you agree to, they try to match that, but you have to remember, especially in high-speed printing, in order to set the press up to produce a given color, it has to be running at that speed, so it has to happen fast, or else you waste a lot of paper. You have to match the color *at press speed.*

SINNER

written and illustrated by carlos sampayo and jose munoz
translated by **deborah bonner** edited by **kim thompson** designed by **dale crain**
lettered by **bill spicer** cover color by **geoffrey notkin** consultant **art spiegelman**
publishers **gary groth** and **kim thompson** recommended for mature readers

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"Quick decisions are the name of the game."

© 1994 Bruce Jones Associates

Corben's twist on a Bruce Jones tale from Pacific's TWISTED TALES.

SHEL: *Wow! There's an awful lot to this technical side, isn't there?*

PAUL: A lot to go wrong, but it's getting better as the machines come into play more and more. Strangely enough, I feel that, especially as production artists go, creativity will increase, because it's like launching a rocket, there are so many steps involved. If you have an accuracy rate of *99.99%*, it still doesn't fly — there's just too many steps.

SHEL: *So you really created your own department — you were responsible for the look of Pacific Comics. Were you ever dissatisfied with something you did, that you had no control over?*

PAUL: No, because in production you're always working with a budget. It involves compromise. I don't think I've ever worked on a project for any company with an unlimited budget, where I could do what I thought was best on every step. So, I guess, learning to live with the compromise, whatever — it doesn't seem frustrating at all. For the money available you produce the best piece you can.

SHEL: *Were there times when you were just so rushed that you had to make very quick decisions?*

PAUL: Quick decisions are the name of the game! Again, because of the complexity of most pieces, one decision can't ruin a book, which is nice, but there probably is no genius decision that makes a book, either. It's a combination of a bunch fairly good decisions, and maybe a couple of great ones, and very few wrong ones on a particular project, that makes it work.

SHEL: *After CAPTAIN VICTORY, what books came into the Pacific stable?*

PAUL: ALIEN WORLDS, TWISTED TALES, the Bruce Jones Associates books, that's when the full-color process really started to become a major part of the production, other than mechanical color. The covers of these books were done from original oil paintings. For instance, ALIEN WORLDS #1 is a **Joe Chiodo** painting, one of my favorites. Joe is a good artist and he's got some idea of how things are reproduced. His colors were easily reproducible. It was separated on a camera as a full-spectrum of color. Later on, we got into doing it with laser scan, which is a computer-controlled process.

SHEL: *Let's take an average day in the production department of Pacific at its peak.*

PAUL: Most of my assignments came from **Steve Schanes**, I was hired as his assistant, and in addition to the production that's tied to a particular publication, a book or whatever, there's always the supportive stuff — catalogues, display ads, postcards were produced in-house, the art was sized, cards were created, lots of lists, posters.

SHEL: *Did you have much creative control over this aspect of the line?*

PAUL: Yes, it was very fair at Pacific. Steve was the art director, and liked to exercise his control, but not necessarily on every project every time. As things changed different people took on the lion's share of the creative aspect in production. Usually, we started with someone else's art, and we'd make it printable, borders, type, arranging the elements . . .

SHEL: *Did you do any original copywriting?*

"There's still a lot of resistance to glossy

The glossy stock used in SOMERSET HOLMES, though beautifully enhancing colors, turned some readers off.

PAUL: That's always involved, unfortunately.

SHEL: *You don't enjoy that?*

PAUL: I don't see myself as a copywriter. I don't feel I'm that good at it.

SHEL: *You have to be sort of a huckster to go out and beat the drum and write copy to sell the product.*

PAUL: I have great respect for the people who can do it.

SHEL: *Steve Schanes told me you were indispensible to the company in its vital growth period. Who was the next person hired to help out in your department?*

PAUL: Tony Frutti was next. He did pretty much the same thing I did — he was expected to set type from the camera, lay out, design, page numbers, touching up the original artwork, which you don't actually do — what you do is create a high-quality black-and-white reproduction of the art and touch that up. Size, proportion —

SHEL: *The artist had drawn it at the wrong size?*

PAUL: Yes, invariably, without exception. I was amazed that in the past two-and-a-half years, I can only recall two artists actually asking me what the shape of a comic-book page is! I'm sure that there are enough professionals out there who measure one, so that they don't need to ask, but quite a bit of the art is just simply the wrong shape.

SHEL: *These types of things would probably not happen at DC or Marvel, because I understand that they give the artist actual paper with borders in blue, so that the artist knows what size to work on.*

PAUL: Aha — but that doesn't always work! I'm sure that they have the same problem, too. For instance, when a book is finished, one of the last steps is that it's trimmed, on the three sides that are not bound. There are only certain tolerances that they can handle. Since the artwork is originally done to a larger scale, and printed at about a 60% reduction, the artist must extend his art well beyond the border. The edges of this art will never print, but if it's not there, white paper or black cover is gonna show through, and it's gonna look tacky.

A lot of production is simply taking the artist's original and simply extending the borders on all four sides, maybe another half-inch. Usually the production artist's art never shows, but occasionally a line gets in here or there.

BARBARA: One of the other things Paul and Pacific did was trying to upgrade the

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paper, it's funny about tradition."

comics. They were among the first to use the better paper, Ventura Web, and then a glossy stock, for SOMERSET HOLMES — and it added so much to the art.

SHEL: *And now so many of the major companies are using that, too.*

PAUL: There's still a lot of resistance to glossy paper, it's funny about tradition. My background is in general graphics, not comics, and glossy paper is accepted there. One of the reasons it's used is you get a much higher quality reproduction on it than you can get on an uncoated sheet, or a dull-coated sheet. Most of them in comics, even if they print now on a coated stock — it's a dull or a matte-coat, rather than the gloss, simply because of tradition! Or people don't like the look of the shiny page.

SHEL: *More of a magazine than a newsprint pulp look?*

PAUL: Which is very hard to do good printing on. It is, of course, less expensive, which the publishers like, but at the same time it's very limiting.

SHEL: *It's like a blotter, isn't it?*

PAUL: Soaks the ink up.

BARBARA: Plus the newsprint color itself interferes with the colors being reproduced, because it's basically a yellow color, whereas the other paper was whiter, had more punch to the colors.

PAUL: Most of the color you see on the page comes from light travelling through the ink, then bouncing off the white page and going back through the ink again and getting a second filtration before it reaches your eye. So the color of the paper adds a considerable amount to the color you see.

SHEL: *Now that you mention it, I can remember being shocked and turned off by a too-intense color-comics page. There was a transitional period, where maybe the colorists were not used to working that way.*

PAUL: Watching a transition in a field like coloring was kind of interesting. It'd been a tradition for maybe twenty or thirty years, where the colorist did, as I said earlier, the color guides. When Pacific came along and revamped the grayline technique, (I believe it was originally done in the '40s, but not with modern printing techniques), it gave the colorist not only a wider range of color to use — literally jumping from a maximum of 63 available colors to a range of something over 14,000! Originally, a colorist needed a good sense of color but didn't necessarily have to have a good technique, because what they produced was a guide for someone else — a technician — to actually produce the color. With the laser scan color that Pacific began, the colorist not only picked out the colors, but actually put them on the page, and they reproduced *exactly* as they went down.

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A PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE FROM FRED & BIANCA

THIEVERY IS BEST LEFT TO TRAINED PROFESSIONALS! AMATEURS NOT ONLY LOWER THE LEVEL OF WORKMANSHIP, THEY COULD ALSO GET HURT!

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"A lot of people use spit and Q-tips!"

SHEL: *And a lot of times you could see water marks and —*

PAUL: You sure could! You could see all kinds of problems. What turned out to be the best technique that they found, and a lot of people got very proficient at it, is water-based markekrs on graylines, using spit and a Q-tip to smooth the colors! I know the spit turns most people off, but I've never found anything that works better.

BARBARA: It was amazing to learn from the other artists who were doing that, how to use that method — it takes a lot, because there's a chemical coating on the paper that you have to be careful not to go past. If you rub too hard you'll pull all the color, all the emulsion off, so you had to have a real delicate touch, but you had to be able to work those markers. You could get a very blended continuous kind of tone. A lot faster, too! You had to work before it dried down.

PAUL: One thing a lot of people don't seem to understand is that if you put a color under the black it actually makes a difference in the value of that black. If you put a color under only half of that black — it's going to stand out like a sore thumb! Putting a blue under the black will make it very cold and dark. Putting a red or an orange or yellow under it will warm it up and give you a whole different black effect. That's another tool that was never available to colorists before.

SHEL: *The laser scanner sees all this?*

PAUL: Yes.

BARBARA: Brent Anderson knows a whole lot about that, you can see it in SOMERSET HOLMES.

SHEL: *I don't think the big companies have experimented that much with this, have they?*

PAUL: No, the big companies have inherited, more or less, the European blueline method, having the registration built right into the coloring process. No matter how careful people are, there will always be a problem with the coloring being outside the lines, with the pages having that slight out-of-focus look, but with the grayline method that Pacific revitalized — I say revitalized, because it was done in the '40s — and new materials had been invented since then which made it even better yet. It's an absolutely dimensionally stabilized system, that if everything's right, you can print within one dot! In printer's terms, we would print with 150-line screens, so within 1/150th of an inch everthing would be in register — which is simply not possible with the European system.

BARBARA: And Pacific started using finer screens.

PAUL: Which gives you more detail and a more subtle range of colors. It doesn't increase the range of colors, but it gives you twice the gradation of those colors.

SHEL: *What else does a production manager do?*

PAUL: It's funny, but a lot of it is what you *don't* do. For instance, I feel that one of the largest contributions I made was when we got a new color separator, I checked the proofs and told Steve that they would not print. When you consider that a press run on a book can run anywhere from $16,000 to maybe $30,000, NOT spending that money is almost as good as having it in your pocket. It was due to a fault at the separator, and of course they were able to correct it — the book was a little late but the quality was still there. I felt that that was important — to keep something bad from happening.

SHEL: *What was the shortest time you had to get a project out?*

PAUL: About three hours, actually. *(Laughter.)* There were some schedules I can't believe! It was a black-and-white publication of some sort. We'd done some of the collateral work, the cover work, the logos, but when it came time to finish the

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JACK HUNTER #1

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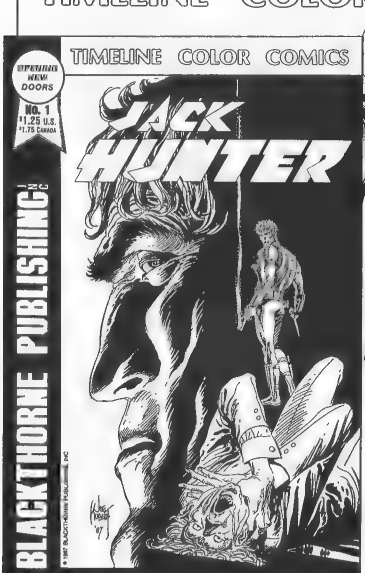

Written by
BRUCE JONES!
Pencils & Inks by
DELL BARRAS!
Cover #1 by
JOE KUBERT!

JACK HUNTER! Combat veteran in Southeast Asia. Agent for both the CIA and NSB. A man extremely good at doing extremely nasty jobs. A man pushed over the edge of sanity, into madness and amnesia. Loose in the streets. Somewhere.

JACK HUNTER! This is not just an adventure story filled with explosive action and intrigue, but an intense character study. The story of a man pushed far past the limits of lunacy, struggling to find out who he is in a world where every face may hide a deadly enemy.

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"The competition is fierce! A challenge."

© 1985 Frank Thorne

book it turned out it was done in about three hours — that's very atypical. A book should take about two months in production, at least. Some of the large book publishers in this country usually schedule a book for about nine months, after the manuscript is completed, until the book is ready to be distributed. That's not an unreasonably long schedule. Doing a comic book in two months is really a tight schedule.

SHEL: *Were there opportunities for you to use your creative layout abilities as well as these technical production abilities we've been discussing?*

PAUL: Oh, sure — it was a very broad spectrum job at Pacific. One of the things was designing the display ads, sometimes creating a look for a whole series of books.

SHEL: *Where did the ads appear?*

PAUL: In the various comics industry publications and in- house flyers that the company sent out to distributors and retail stores.

SHEL: *The public never saw these?*

PAUL: Right, usually. In fact, Pacific did have a nice idea of doing a catalog without any prices on it so that the retailer could set it on the counter and let the customers look through and see what was available without having to reveal what his price was, his mark-up and stuff like that. I always thought that that was a good idea — I don't think it has caught on, unfortunately.

SHEL: *Did you get a kick out of blowing these illustrations up and throwing some type underneath? For instance, the first Berni Wrightson cover — whose idea was it to blow up those burning eyes from the interior and use them for the cover?*

PAUL: That was Steve's, he saw that panel

and said, "That's our cover!" So I took the panel, and from it, created a cover, with all the pricing information, the logo — made sure that it was cropped with some design and balance.

You know, comic-book stores are hard — maybe it's my graphic background, but there's such a visual overload. Designing things to go into a comics store — advertising, or even the cover of a book — the competition is fierce. There's so much color and motion it's just a cacophony of visual sights! It's a real challenge.

SHEL: *Can we clear up the misconception that coloring comics is easy, almost like coloring books for adults?*

BARBARA: *(Gasps.)*

PAUL: There's two problems here — there's the traditional colorist and then there's the new stuff. The traditional colorist has to accomplish everything with only 64 colors, which is not always too easy. The modern techniques are just the opposite. Now you've got 14,000 colors, and the trick is to pick the best ones to get your message across.

It was interesting to experiment. Sometimes we'd sneak in a color that we knew was going to be difficult to reproduce just to see what would happen to it in actual practice. There is no perfect proofing system. The best proof is to go out and get a printed book and compare it to the original and see just what happened.

SHEL: *Did you work on any of the color portfolios that Pacific produced at that time?*

PAUL: Yes, the color and the black-and-white portfolios had been more or less my baliwick. Steve was gracious about leaving me more-or-less alone to work in that area. I took the ball and ran with it. I designed all the portfolios that Schanes & Schanes did from that point on, and I've been designing the new ones that Blackthorne is publishing.

SHEL: *When you say design them, the plates are already finished by the artist —?*

PAUL: Something that's important — when you work hard on a piece you feel like you own it. Of course, the artist who did the original artwork certainly feel that way, too! I'm sure he feels it's more his portfolio than mine and all the people who do the various technical things on it. But what happens is, the artist furnishes seven

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ON SALE SOON

THE COMICS JOURNAL

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HUH??
WHATTA'YA MEAN— PANDERING?!! WE'RE TALKIN' HIGH ART HERE! I EVEN HIRED A SPECIAL MODEL FROM THE *IVAR THEATRE!!
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"We replaced all the lights at Blackthorne."

© 1988 Matt Baker

pieces of artwork, painting or color slides or whatever. They're usually different sizes, and not always in proportion to whatever size the portfolio needs to be printed in, so there's the matter of cropping, and deciding what sort of a look there might be. You have a general basic design for the cover, you have to pick the proper typeface, lay it out, decide whether there should be Initial Caps or not, how much space between the paragraphs, how big should the type be, what kind of look carries with it the theme of the portfolio?

SHEL: *Do you determine the type of paper for the folder?*

PAUL: Usually, although we've lately, at Blackthorne, been going with highly coated stocks simply because it gives a better color reproduction to show off the artist's work. Fancier papers, uncoated and textured, are more expensive, and maybe more artsy but don't always do justice to the original art.

SHEL: *I noticed, on the new Boris portfolio from Blackthorne, that the type is inlaid with gold. Did you determine that?*

PAUL: Yes. Since the transition from Pacific Comics to the new Blackthorne, we thought that it would be nice to keep some of the identity, especially in the portfolios. Schanes & Schanes, which was part and parcel of Pacific Comics, was probably one of the largest science fiction and fantasy portfolio publishers in the U.S. I think they produced somewhere in the neighborhood of fifty portfolios in a very short number of years.

For the Boris portfolio we took the typeface that had originally been designed for the logo of Pacific Comics, and took the original letters and spelled out "fantasy", and had that stamped on the front of the cover in, it's actually a bronze gold, rather than a gold gold, which I felt lent itself to the warm tones in the cover painting that Boris did.

SHEL: *How much did they sell for?*

PAUL: From twenty to fifty dollars. That's nice, because it does give you a budget to work with. Foil stamping for that cover was frightfully expensive, it's priced on the square inch and amount of pressure and heat required to transfer the foil. At a large size like that portfolio — it's nice to have the budget to be able to do that. And most of the prices are not direct — you have to know the process to know what you're being charged for. There's always more than one way to print or publish, the trick is to find the way that works best for what you're gonna do.

Speaking of small details, we've just gone through and replaced all the lights at Blackthorne with color-corrected fluorescent lighting. Most flourescent lights give out a lot of blue and green light, so anything you look at in that lighting will tend to have a blue or green cast, whereas, if you look at something under incandescent light it tends to produce a more yellow-reddish kind of light. The industry standard is 5,000 degree Kelvin light, that's a temperature scale that relates to the coolness of the dominant wavelength in a frequency of light. For instance, a warm red light might have a Kelvin reading of maybe 800 or 1,000 degrees, whereas a blue light would have a reading of maybe 6,000 degrees. Natural sunlight, they figure, is close to 5,000 degrees Kelvin, and that's become more-or-less an industry standard.

Looking at color under 5,000 degree Kelvin light gives you a reference so that you can talk to somebody on the other side of the country, who's also looking at the same piece under the same light and you can then talk about the color. If you're both

Flamingo, the exciting gypsy gal from Matt Baker, by Pacific.

"Steve Schanes held art classes for us."

looking at the piece under two different kinds of light — your're in two different worlds!

It's a small thing, but it's made a dramatic difference. Speaking of things that can go wrong, Barbara's had one of the ultimate disasters.

BARBARA: It was terrible! I had three days to do this coloring job, the cover of this book. And I used collage and worked my little heart out, and even took a fourth day to finish the details. We took it in and **Paul** took it to the people who were going to laser scan it, and they put it on the scanner wrong and destroyed the original art.

PAUL: This machine is a small drum that the artwork is attached to, curled around it and attached tightly to this drum that spins at around 800 rpm. The separator didn't attach it well, and one end came off at 800 rpm and it flailed itself to death inside the machine!

SHEL: *GOOD LORD!*

BARBARA: I think it was a **Joe Chiodo** cover. BOLD ADVENTURES!

SHEL: *Did the separator make good? Did they give you credit towards your next job with them?*

PAUL: No, they just didn't charge us for the job.

SHEL: *Oh — how nice of them!*

PAUL: And on the next job we just changed separators. Or, actually, we did use them one more time, and when they saw Barbara's name on the job they put it under glass and photographed it rather than spinning it at 800 rpm!

EVERYONE: *(Laughter.)*

SHEL: *Part of Pacific's success was* **Dave Stevens'** ROCKETEER comic book. Did you help with that, Barbara?

BARBARA: Not directly, but in a way we exchanged techniques. We were finding new ways to overlay zipatone sheets and change the color nuances even more.

SHEL: *Do you get any feedback from all this technical improvement?*

BARBARA: Another neat thing that **Steve Schanes** did was that he had an art class, which helped us all grow together. A weekly life drawing class, where we would practice different techniques and talk about the

Burne Hogarth's TARZAN, from 1942, repackaged inbetween slick covers by Blackthorne's Comic-Strip Preserves.

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"These '40s techniques had been lost. . ."

© 1996 Steve Hudson & Cliff MacGillivray

art of coloring and inking — a learning session.

PAUL: Steve had many of the artists who were local coming once a week, or at least he offered them the opportunity. **Brent Anderson** was there, **Chris Miller**, **Joe Chiodo**, **Dave Stevens**, and from time to time, whatever artist was in town. It was a chance not only to practice their art but to talk to one another.

BARBARA: It was wonderful!

SHEL: *Now that Blackthorne is rebuilding, and Steve is coming back strong, I have a hunch that all these discoveries will just be a prelude to future things.*

BARBARA: It's one of the good things about working for him — he wants the best that an artist can produce. He treats the artist with a lot of respect, gives them the freedom to really create.

PAUL: He's not afraid to let you try something new, which a lot of the other companies are.

SHEL: *Paul, do you feel that there's much room for reform in comics production in general?*

PAUL: Graphic arts is communicating arts, and communication is the problem to be answered. People in the communicating arts don't communicate to one another enough! Either because they're not physically close enough, or whatever. Especially now, with all these new techniques that give the artist a tremendous amount of creative freedom that he didn't have a year ago even, certainly not five years ago. But then there are techniques from the '40s that artists used to have that have been lost! They can be found, though. If I were a non-production artist, I'd jump on and try some of these new forms of expression.

SHEL: *Let's talk about this VANGUARD cover that you did.*

BARBARA: One of the things that I did was deciding to go mostly with a collage technique. Before we actually started on the cover itself I spent half a day looking at magazines to see what I could use as a

"The drool is from Heineken beer."

© 1984 Kaluta & Alcher

background color. For instance, the face of the werewolf, and the fire behind him was basically a photograph of the sunset.

SHEL: *You actually cut it out and pasted it up behind him on your board?*

PAUL: Very carefully, under a high-powered magnifying glass.

BARBARA: At least a 15-power glass. For instance, the tongue of the werewolf is actually a photo of a piece of steak!

SHEL: *(Laughter.)*

BARBARA: Each tooth, part of a chemical flame, we cut out separately — we didn't want the garish white, we wanted it to look more realistic, so we went for that ivory type color.

SHEL: *Those two green cat's eyes really get me.*

PAUL: That's the only part that was painted — Barbara painted those herself.

BARBARA: My cat was the model for the eyes. We'd tried human eyes in there but they just didn't look scary enough.

PAUL: **Michael Kaluta's** linework is incredible. You can see how production people get involved with their work — we've both been saying "this cover that *I* did" and you realize that to the rest of the world we didn't do anything — it was the artist! I've worked on projects where the typesetter calls it his book because he put all the words in there!

SHEL: *I think that this is why our publisher, David Anthony Kraft, wants to talk to people like you, because each department is so closely involved and important to the finished product.*

BARBARA: I think it's interestisng that **Michael Kaluta** left the eyes blank.

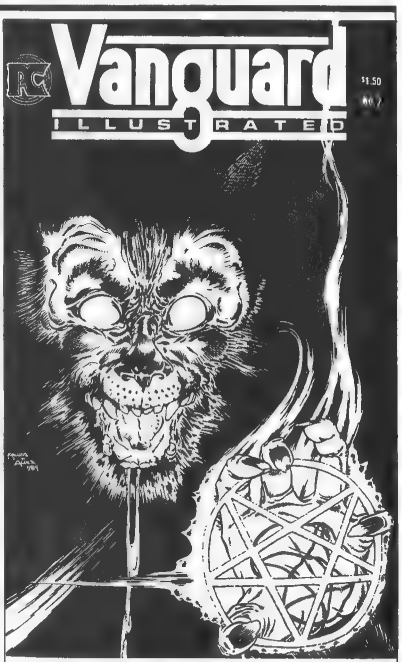
SHEL: *What was his reaction to what you'd done?*

PAUL: He asked for our autographs! So we all exchanged autographs — he, Barbara and I.

BARBARA: It was fun to tell him how the different elements, all except for the eyes, were pasted down, like the drool is from a bottle of Heineken beer, and the hair at the bottom is from a PLAYBOY story on redheads, but it matched the sunset colors.

PAUL: One of the difficult things about comics art, and it's difficult to get a new separator to understand this, is that with normal printing separations, everything gets separated, while in comics work, the black does not — it always remains a solid line — or should. There are some publishers that don't do that, and that's why their books lack the intensity that Pacific and Eclipse has — that nice sparkle because the lines are solid black — no white dots.

So it's the black line that determines the focus. so we can shoot it totally out of focus, under the laser scanner, and it's the



black lines that give it an integrated whole.

BARBARA: Underneath the line, the color part looks like this abstract conglomeration. What's really fun is to turn it over! Paul did that on his second cover.

PAUL: Because it's two-sided art, done on clear mylar, so there's actually a picture on the back which doesn't relate, and if you flip it over and put it with the black it's totally bizarre!

BARBARA: You know when I was in art school, before I ever had anything to do with this field, the art teacher who I revered the most said, "Study comic-book art if you want to develop as an artist. That's where you look!"

SHEL: *That's so rare — they usually have such a snooty attitude toward comics.*

PAUL: With some of these new developments in materials and techniques, the comics artist has a much broader range of creative devices, if they can learn how to use them. Some of the artists seem to be picking up on them real well. We could be in for an amazing renaissance in comic books right now!

"I wrote the game and did most of the artwork and production work for it."

Jovial Joe Italiano being put on the spot by the Carousin Joneses, Ken and Kenny.

JOE ITALIANO

This most unusual interview took place at a moment's notice. A quick call from Paul Power resulted in my rushing home after work, cleaning up and hurrying with my family to the Comic Castle in Fullerton. We picked up Joseph Italiano, Peter Hughes, Andrew South, Australian role playing game creators and comic fans supreme.

Thanks to a major chemical fire in Anaheim, the trip to the nearby Magic Kingdom took two long hours. When we finally arrived, I conducted my most unusual interview thus far. As we worked our way through the maximum summer crowds and went on the skyway baskets to Tomorrowland, the people mover, the Pirates of the Carribean and the Haunted Mansion, I carried my trusty mini-cassette recorder and interviewed these three witty, friendly Aussie boys. As you can imagine, the whole affair drew stares of disbelief from the other patrons at Disneyland. But, hey, what can I tell you? I've been to Disneyland over a thousand times (I have a year round pass), but I'll never forget the fun of this unique night...

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Joseph Italiano
Born: 21 March 1957 — Ringwood (Victoria) Australia
Residence: 27 Percy St. Mitchum 3132, Victoria, Australia
Occupation: Graphic Artist/Comic Retailer (Images-Images)
Credits: Convention co-ordinator for Phantastacon (role-playing) '81-'85 and for Comicon I and II. Creator/design for Super Squadron, The Tome (Super Squadron module), MULTIVERSE magazine, THE AUSTRALIAN COMIC COLLECTOR (TACC) and COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE. Comic strips in Australian magazines.

KEN JONES: *We're going to conduct an usual interview in the heart of Disneyland with some Australian comic fans and role-playing game makers. Okay, guys, first introduce yourselves to the audience...*
JOSEPH ITALIANO: I wrote the game and did most of the artwork and production work for it.
ANDREW SOUTH: I am a friend and assistant to Joe.
PETER HUGHES: I draw a lot of the comic strips in the magazine and help out.
KEN: *Why are you guys visiting America?*
JOE: Primarily to attend Origin which is a large gaming convention over in Baltimore. We're here to push our products. We want to get distribution in the States. We've had the game out for two years, but we haven't made much penetration into the States, which is what the convention is all about.
KEN: *I understand you guys have been influenced in your endeavors by comic*

"I'd like to blow up the comics industry."

books. Why don't you tell us about that.

JOE: Well, I've been a comic-book collector for some fifteen plus years. I was so into it that I wanted to become a part of it as much as I possibly could. Unfortunately, there's no real industry in Australia, so I couldn't draw comic books or write them, so the next best thing was to live them. I discovered role playing games mainly through DUNGEON AND DRAGONS. I found that through fantasy role playing games you can do just that. Unfortunately at the time, there weren't any superhero role-playing games that fit my needs so, for my own personal use I created SUPER SQUADRON, which as far as I am concerned lets me do that. It lets me play and draw up characters which I can play just like a comic book. You can live out those experiences. After a couple of years of playing around with the game it became a little more serious and after a few friends advised me to continue all the way through we decided to publish it.

KEN: *Tell us a little bit more about the game — I think our readers in America will be interested in it.*

JOE: It's very hard to describe without actually seeing the game itself. Basically the rules are designed to allow you to create literally any comic-book character. You can create characters as powerful as Superman or something mundane like a detective. It's not quite that easy to get that extreme but the ability exists within the game to have that extreme. That's something I've found other games don't allow. They tend to compromise. They only give middle range characters. They also go out of their way to balance the characters, which if you've got a good game master, isn't really necessary. It is fun to have a Superman type go up against someone who is totally puny every now and then. For instance, in our first game the Tome — primarily half the adventures are based on the super hero's ability to reason and think. The super powers can help you but they're not essential. If you can lift mountians and destroy planets that's great, but it doesn't help you win the game.

KEN: *Tell us what your favorite comics were...*

JOE: I think the first thing I picked up that got me really into comic books was SPIDER-MAN. I didn't start getting into collecting "full time" until **Neal Adams** started doing all the work for...

KEN: *DC?*

JOE: No, Marvel. I don't think that the color versions of DETECTIVE, BATMAN and SUPERMAN ever did get put out in Australia.

KEN: *Why do you think that was?*

JOE: That was mainly because the Australian publishers bought up the rights to do the stories in reprint form, so the original material never came in. Even now you still can't get those main titles on the newstands. You can get them in comic shops and in reprint form but that's it.

KEN: *Tell us about what kind of import titles from America you Australian fans do see?*

JOE: At the moment, most of the American titles that are available here are available in Australia on the newstands. That includes most of the direct sales titles from America which, oddly enough, appear on the newstands. We get most of the Marvels, DCs and the Eagle line from England. There's only about a half a dozen comic shops in all of Australia!

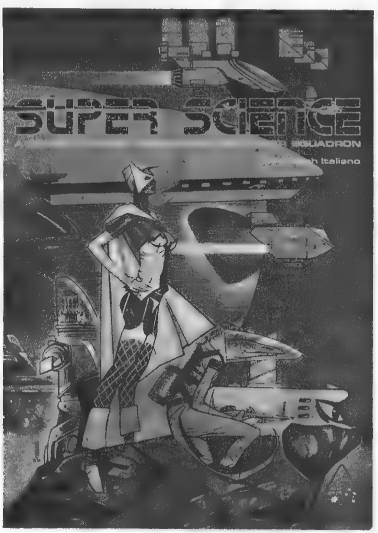
KEN: *Tell us about your current favorite comics...*

JOE: I do in fact like MARVELOUS MAUREEN. I like that because it's different. I think that what's happening now to a lot of comic books is that there are too many standardizations and too many formulas. Everyone wants to do the same sort of thing when they hit on something great. Marvel hit on X-MEN and DC hit on TEEN TITANS, so what do they do? They mass produce similar titles, which is rather pointless. You've got to try to do something different.

KEN: *If you guys were going to change the comic-book industry, what would you do?*

JOE: Obviously and most biasedly I'd like to blow it up so that we could start one in Australia.

KEN: *Just to give the readers a sense of where we are right now, we're on the Sky-*



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JOE ITALIANO

"The Australian comics industry died."

way Baskets high over Fantasyland. Let's talk about the magazine you publish.

JOE: MULTIVERSE is a role-playing game magazine which we publish in Australia. It is the only magazine there which deals with that subject. Unfortunately, games and comic books are very similar, particularly in Australia. Neither has really established its own native industry. The magazine serves a two-fold purpose. It assists us to produce supplementary materials for our own game and also to present the views of all the game creators and designers in Australia. There are a lot of people over there who'd like to create more material for existing games in America, but there's just no place to show their stuff. We hope that through the magazine, we can show the world what Australian designers can do.

KEN: *Look up there guys — take a moment to look at the Abominable Snowman inside the Matterhorn!*

PETER: Wow, that's incredible!

KEN: *Do you think that we will ever see Australian comic-book creators in American comic books in the way we've recently started seeing work from British creators?*

JOE: I very much doubt it in the current context. Unfortunately, the Australian comic industry died very slowly over a period of years starting in the '50s and is virtually non-existent now. You get an odd attempt out which, as far as I know, no distributor will touch. All of the old guys that use to be in comic books have gone onto other fields — mainly animation movies and advertising. There's no place in Australia where anyone can actually get experience in comic books. There's a very small group of fans. It's shriveled up with the comic-book industry. Essentially there's nowhere to go. The publishers of the reprints don't even want to know about new stuff because there's no money in it for them. What's funny is that they never reprint any Australian material.

KEN: *This is something I've been told to ask every Australian comic-book fan, tell us about the PHANTOM.*

JOE: I don't actually read it. The PHANTOM is not one of the most original comics published in Australia. The Australian PHANTOM is basically newspaper reprints. They're finally starting to use new material. The reason there's such a large following in Australia for the PHANTOM is because it's one of our few books that has been going for a long time. I believe it's been going on for eight or nine hundred issues.

KEN: *Do you think that the average Australian comic-book reader is like his counterpart in America? Is there a large fan market or is there also a lot of casual readers?*

JOE: I think, as in America, it has become a fan oriented market. In America most collectors are into Marvel, DC, and some of the alternatives. The only difference I notice — and it's probably due mainly to the cultural differences — is that Australian fans won't get behind something just because it's got a particular concept behind it, that's been done before. I suppose the most recent example would be the Marvel's SECRET WARS. Everyone in Australia, the same as in America, thought, "Gee, this is great! It'll have hundreds of characters and great new concepts," and it sold well at first but as it progressed it got to where sales dropped off and dealers couldn't give them away!

KEN: *Poetic justice?*

JOE: Let's face it — nothing really happened.

KEN: *You mean the Australians weren't impressed by the fact that the Hulk broke his leg?*

JOE: Unfortunately, we were promised a lot of new concepts and developments and everything that happened in SECRET WARS has been reneged on, so it was totally irrevelant.

KEN: *What did you think about CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS?*

JOE: I loved that. It's much better. Just before we came to Disneyland we were at Comic Castle in Fullerton and despite the fact I've got all this stuff on order at home, it was hard not to buy the latest issues of CRISIS. For example, when I saw the cover of CRISIS #7 with the dead Supergirl in Superman's arms, despite the fact that I knew it was going to happen,

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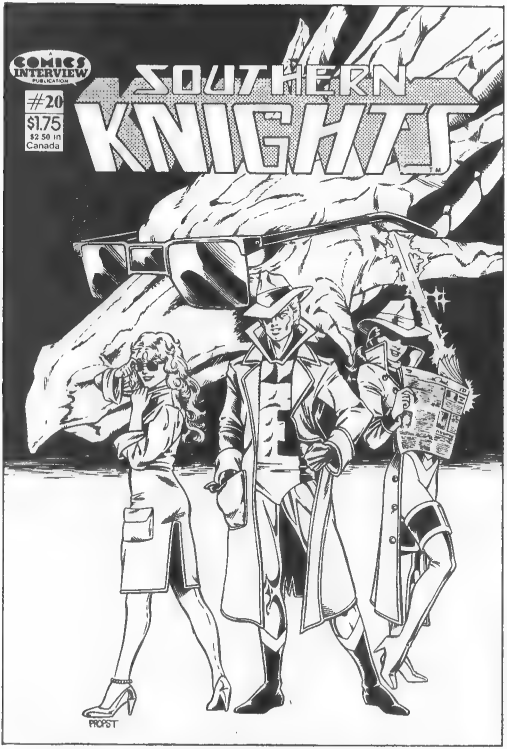

SOUTHERN KNIGHTS #20 **Behind the iron curtain, the Knights get into their new role as undercover superheroes! Don't miss this one!**

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"SECRET WARS was totally irrelevant."

The PHANTOM vs. THE SKY MAIDENS

CAPTURED BY WOMEN!

that really choked me up. That's something that never happened with SECRET WARS.

KEN: *Let's go on the People Mover, guys! Considering you were up at the Comic Castle, if you were in an Australian speciality shop how would it be different?*

JOE: The major difference is size. There's only one store that's anywhere near that size. The range of material is different too, mainly because a lot of those comic books never came out in Australia. During various periods certain comics never came out. You'd find that there are certain books that you just can't get in the States — an interesting example would be CONAN #3. CONAN #3 is classified as rare because of low distribution. What few Americans know is that the reason so few copies of that issue were distributed in the States was because that was the first issue that was brought into Australia.

KEN: *Is Overstreet's Price Guide "the bible" in Australia, too?*

JOE: For some strange reason, the guide picks up a lot of misinformation. What they call low distribution usually means they were dumped out in Australia.

KEN: *Where would you like to go with your role-playing game company?*

JOE: What I'd really like to see is to have us get some kind of distribution in the States. Everyone that has read it so far, including the American reviewers, have liked it. It compares very favorably in their own words with the American products. The problem we face at the moment — and we can't quite ascertain the reasons for — is penetrating into a central distribution. We have heard rumors that a competitor is trying to prevent the product from coming in. We really don't know who's behind it. When a shipment came into the States last year it sold out in two weeks. Even the comic-book distributors can't be bothered at this stage. We're hoping to clear all this up when we go to Origin Con.

KEN: *Tell us more about Origin...*

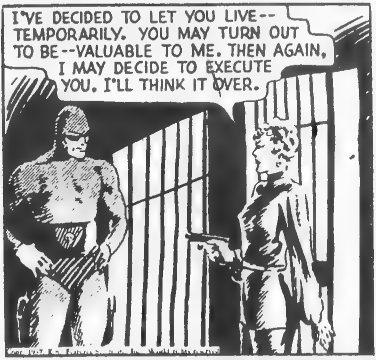
JOE: Origin is an event held in a different capital city every year. It's every similar to a science-fiction convention. What it is, basically, is a combination of trade fair and tournament. The general public can come along and take part in the tournaments. It's held in Baltimore although we have something similar in Australia called Phantastacon.

KEN: *How big are role-playing games in Australia now?*

JOE: It's finally reached the same level as America. Despite the fact that the games have been around a long time, I think that people are becoming more interested in them as they find out that they exist.

KEN: *I noticed that your characters were really interesting looking — which ones do you think would make good comic-book characters and why?*

JOE: That's a difficult question to answer, primarily because I think that what makes a good character is not so much what you draw on a peice of paper or what ability a characters rolls up, but how a player plays or how a game master runs his world. I suppose an easy way to describe it to people who are unfamiliar with the


I'VE DECIDED TO LET YOU LIVE-- TEMPORARILY. YOU MAY TURN OUT TO BE--VALUABLE TO ME. THEN AGAIN, I MAY DECIDE TO EXECUTE YOU. I'LL THINK IT OVER.

Though Joe doesn't read it, a helluva lot of Aussies do — 1930s comics at their best — THE PHANTOM, by Lee Falk & Ray Moore. Available from Ken Pierce, Inc. of Park Forest, Illinois.

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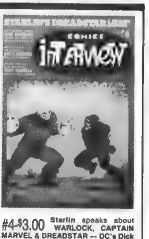

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"Frank Miller did work that wasn't great."

system is to say that whenever you play the game, the game master is the editor-in-chief, he runs Marvel or DC. The players are characters that exist in that universe. Now because the players play their characters, and always develop, something always happens. The players always develop and you don't get stuck in a rut, you don't get stuck in a situation where one character is selling better than another so they have to be the same. If you get bored with a character then you either retire it or kill it off. If you like it, you'll do something with it and you can basically live out those experiences that annoy you in comic books. When you're playing a super hero role-playing game you learn from your mistakes. That's something else. Inevitably what happens is a player will inevitably get married and have kids and the kids grow up and develop into characters as well. It's like a limited series that runs for a hundred issues. It's a complete life.

KEN: *We better hold right here because we're going through the electronic world of TRON.*

JOE: Can you really hear this on paper? Will the readers hear all this on paper?

KEN: *You can always hear my interviews on paper I leave in all the comic book sound effects. Did you guys see this movie?*

JOE: Yeah, I loved it — it's a real shame that they didn't succeed with it financially.

TRON: You have escaped the world of Tron, user! Next time you may not fare so well!

KEN: *Actually, considering the fact that we were talking about games I think it's interesting that we just went through a larger-than-life video game. What do you think about Disneyland, guys, do you think something like this could succeed in Australia?*

JOE: I think the only difficulty is that Australia only has 15 million people and that's spread over the same area as America.

KEN: *What kind of impact has Disney and American popular culture in general had on the Australian people?*

PETER: Well, no other cartoons are shown over there on the big screen but Disney. You don't get all THE SECRETS OF NIMH and all that stuff, which is a pity.

KEN: *How about American TV, music and all that? How much are you guys influenced by those kind of things?*

JOE: In a strange way, we get a great deal of it. We get most of your stuff, the British stuff and our own Australian products. Because of that the average Australian is a lot more aware of you than Americans are of our culture. First things Americans ask us is — do you have a Koala in your backyard and kangaroos on the main roads? I suppose that's because the average American has the seen Skippy and that's it.

KEN: *When you read American comic books before your first trip to America, did any of the idioms or environments seem strange to you?*

JOE: Oddly enough, no, because of the various American movies and TV we've picked up on a lot of the slang, we understand the context the slang is being used in.

KEN: *What artists do you like?*

JOE: I suppose one of my favorites is **Howard Chaykin**. I liked him ever since he started doing really strange stuff like the SCORPION, for Atlas Comics. **Walter Simonson**, great stuff there. **Alan Moore** and **John Bolton** the British guys.

KEN: *Let's go over to the Pirates of the Carribean and the Haunted Mansion.*

JOE: Great, let's go!

KEN: *Back to this thing about your favorite artists.*

JOE: Well, here's one thing I'd like to say. As good as **Frank Miller** was on DAREDEVIL, he did a lot of work be-

A submerged superheroine, Super Squadron style — one of thousands available in the game by Joe.

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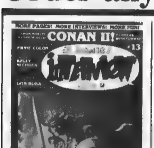

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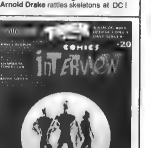

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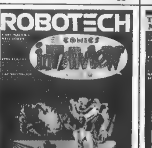

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fore that which wasn't so great. There's no such thing as someone who does great work all the time. Everyone has to keep growing and keep developing all the time. Don't get into a rut. If someone tells you you're great — prove it!

KEN: *I guess we should say that we're almost getng squashed as people line up for the Main Street Electrical Parade. What kind of movies did you like as a kid?*

JOE: Really dumb horror and science-fiction movies like GODZILLA and TURTLES FROM SPACE. Also I liked the good movies, like the ones **Boris Karloff** and **Bela Lugosi** made. I also loved the THUNDERBIRDS PUPPET SHOW. It also appeared in a comic book called TV 21, a British comic book. That's what started me collecting comics.

KEN: *Let's talk to these two blokes. What are your favorite comic books, guys?*

PETER: CRISIS, CEREBUS (I never miss that, been collecting that since #5), SWAMP THING, MARVEL MAN, WARRIOR.

KEN: *What do you think it is about Alan Moore that crosses such international lines? He's loved all over the world.*

PETER: He's an excellent storyteller. He has great ideas that are new. He's bringing an English approach to American Comics, which is something that hasn't been done yet.

ANDREW: I got into comic books only recently. Actually mainly through my association with Joe. Basically I started picking up interesting comics because of my association with role playing. They're a source of inspiration. With that in mind, I find that my favorite comic is DR. STRANGE, because it's quite like DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS. I enjoyed CRISIS. We Australians sound like we're being aped off by DC don't we?

KEN: *Perhaps we should send Dick Giordano down to Australia on a goodwill tour? Here's a question I always ask everyone, hoping somebody will have the answer: What would you like to change in comic books?*

PETER: Get rid of the dead weight like G.I. JOE. Hear that, **Jim Shooter?** There's no reason why everyone has to rip everyone off! Creator's rights! Creator's rights!

JOE: I'll tell you something about G.I. JOE. Without all the promotion you get in the States it's a dead title in Australia. It doesn't sell at all. G.I. JOE doesn't sell because it's a good comic, it sells because of all the advertising. If you gave that much promotion to any comic, it'd sell as well.

KEN: *Even SECRET WARS?*

JOE: Perhaps SECRET WARS III will only be one issue long.

KEN: *Was there ever anything similar to the comics code in Australia? In America, in the '50s, parents were worried that comic books would turn us all into brain dead juvenile deliquent monsters.*

JOE: We had something a hell of a lot worse, actually. We had two basic sources of our code. One was the Queensland code — and that's a very conservative part of the country — and the other was the distributors, themselves. That restricted the Australian comic-book industry a hell of a lot more than the American comic- book code every did. It came down to two guys' opinions and if they didn't like a comic book they wouldn't distribute it. Queensland was even worse. I remember a book called SCORPIAN. It was a strange sort of a book in that it featured a villain as the main character of the book. He would try to commit a crime but it would never work, so it ended up for the best, because he never got caught. It managed to show the villain's view point without glorifying the villain.

KEN: *That sounds like American politics.*

JOE: The Queensland Government banned that book and eventually the distributors dropped it as well.

KEN: *What goes in terms of sensuality? Is the audience in Australia offended by eroticism in comic books?*

JOE: I suppose we're fairly lax in that area. We're fairly close to Sweden, from what I understand. Prostitution is legalized. It's a safe release for people who can't get a release any other way.

KEN: *Just like comic books? (Laughter.)*

JOE: I don't like violence in any form. I am against war.

KEN: *No wonder you didn't like SECRET WARS. "I deserted from SECRE WARS."*

JOE: That would make a great bumper sticker.

KEN: *What are your ambitions&*

JOE: I don't really have any long term ambitions. I suppose I am a bit wrapped up in my own fantasies. That's why I created SUPER SQUADRON. I want to experience the sensation of that kind of a game. Since one didn't exist, I created it. I hope that more people will get a chance to experience it. As long as I can keep doing this kind of work, I will.

PETER: To be paid for all the work I've done for Joe so far. If everybody out there buys a copy and makes Joe rich, I'll get a piece of it, too.

ANDREW: I guess our long term ambition is to promote our products because we feel that they are basically sound and we enjoy playing them. We hope other people experience playing SUPER SQUADRON because we feel that it's better than any other super hero role-playing game on the market.

Joe, Peter & Andrew, after a backbreaking day at Disneyland.

LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

DISTURBED BY "30-MINUTE COMMERCIALS"

Dear COMICS INTERVIEW:

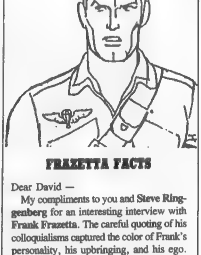
I found your interview with G.I. JOE writer **Buzz Dixon** very interesting, but I'd like to take strong exception to his comment that people who criticize shows like G.I. JOE are "professional critics...who make their living bitching about things."

Not to shock you, or anything, but there are quite a few people out there who are disturbed by this current trend of "30-minute commercials," and not all of them are "professional critics," myself included. Mr. **Dixon** would have donebetter to stick to defending his program instead of attacking the motivations behind its critics. And what about those product-based TV shows? On one hand, Mr. **Dixon** claims there is no connection between toy sales and animated shows based on these toys, and then turns around and compares THE TRANFORMERS to CHALLENGE OF THE GOBOTS, and says not only do the Transformers toys outsell GoBots toys, but he also implies that one of the reasons the Transformers toys are more popular is because of the "Saturday-morning mindlessness" of the GOBOTS show. Is there or is there not a connection between this kind of blatant merchandising on TV, and subsequent toy sales? I think there is. Perhaps not a direct, one-to-one relationship, but there most certainly is a connection. HE-MAN toys would probably still be popular, but probably not quite as popular or well-known without the accompanying TV series. Of course, since I have never produced an animated TV special, or written a script for a cartoon series, I guess Mr. **Dixon** would probably brush off my opinions as easily as he brushes off the opinions of **Peggy Charon** and **Dr. Radecki.**

This is not to say that all product-based series are bad. Two of the best examples of well-written, entertaining "30-minute commercials" are the two Disney TV series on Saturday Morning: THE WUZZLES and DISNEY'S ADVENTURES OF THE GUMMI BEARS. Both of these programs feature strong writing and characterization, but also have some of the best animation ever to appear on Saturday morning. And Mr. **Dixon's** show, G.I. JOE, is certainly not the worst product-based series (unlike a violent, slightly racist show like RAMBO, or an overtly militaristic piece of junk like ROBOTECH). Nonetheless, I find it disturbing that we consider our children little more than tiny marketing receptacles, whose entertainment is geared primarily to get them to pester their parents for the latest toys.

Once upon a time, people like **Walt Disney** (not a bad business man, himself) were able to produce films and TV shows primarily for the entertainment of audiences, young and old. Merchandising was a factor, of course. In fact, merchandising continues to be a central facet of **Disney's** company. The difference is that, in **Disney's** day, the merchandising aspect was considered only AFTER the film was written and produced. The theory was that if you created a memorable work of art, everything else would follow. Which is why films like SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS, FANTASIA, and BAMBI, and the characters in these films, remain popular nearly half a century after they were first introduced to American audiences. We'll wait around forty or fifty years, and see if the same can be said for G.I. JOE and THE TRANSFORMERS.

Timothy D. Fay
729 Kimball St. NE
Fridley, MN 55432



FRAZETTA FACTS

Dear David —

My compliments to you and **Steve Ringgenberg** for an interesting interview with **Frank Frazetta.** The careful quoting of his colloquialisms captured the color of Frank's personality, his upbringing, and his ego. I prefer the warts-and-all style interviews to the standard media puff-pieces.

In the interest of accuracy, though, I must point out the many errors the article contained: If let go, these things seem to get repeated so much that they assume a false air of authenticity:

1. **Frazetta** did more than one "Loathsome Lore" page for CREEPY. He also did the antismoking comic half page that ran in the **Warren** magazines.

2. Frank has done other comics work since CREEPY. One piece that springs to mind immediately is the comic book cover to "Dragula" that was in a NATIONAL LAMPOON.

3. Steve's optimism that "Frazetta's work will be around for a long, long time, as will the work of any artist of lasting worth" is heartening. History does not bear him out, however, as I could give him pages of names of great artists whose work has been forgotten.

4. The caption to the illustration on page 29 could be misconstrued by some readers. It should be made clear that **Krenkel** (or **Williamson,** but most likely **Krenkel**) drew the dreamlike city — not **Frazetta.**

5. The "Wild Bill Hickok" #4 cover is *not* **Frazetta's.** It's by **Howard Winfield.**

6. The three character studies of Conan on page 41 were *not* for the Conan film. They were done years prior to talk of a film and were originally sketches purchased by a private collector in Los Angeles.

7. Page 43 is *not* the dust jacket to AT THE EARTH'S CORE. It may have been intended as that, but the book was never printed with Frank's illustrations.

8. The head of **Buster Crabbe** in the upper right of page 49 was not drawn for or published in BUSTER CRABBE comics.

9. If you're going to print a **Frazetta** LI'L ABNER then try to find a much more representative strip. There are many.

I won't comment on the errors *within* the interview, other than to say they are not **Steve Ringgenberg's.**

Thanks for an insightful interview. **Bob Barrett** will probably spot twice as many [illegible]

William Stout
1468 Loma Vista St.
Pasadena, Calif. 91104

Bil, you raised some interesting points in your letter commenting on the Frazetta interview. In the interest of fairness and accuracy, however, I'd like to point out that although I did do the interview, and did supply Xeroxed artwork from my collection, complete with copious notes, I did not, in fact, write the actual captions. That task fell to managing editor Mark Borax. I would like to apologize to Frank Frazetta

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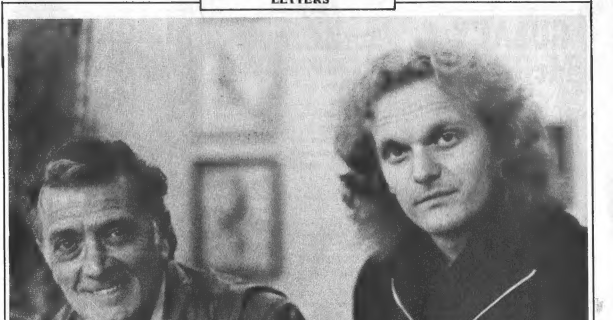
Photo: Steve Bryant



Frank Frazetta and **Steve Ringgenberg**.

and COMICS INTERVIEW for whatever errors I made in my notes to Mark, or in my introduction.

I'd next like to go over these points in the order that you raised them:

1. I'm aware of Frazetta's anti-smoking ad for Warren. I didn't mention this ad and certain other Frazetta artwork because the sheer volume of work that Frank has produced makes it impossible to list everything in an introduction of reasonable length. If Frazetta did any more "Loathsome Lore" pages besides the one on werewolves, I would be very interested in seeing them.

2. I am, of course, also aware of the "Dragula" cover Frazetta did for NATIONAL LAMPOON, and the various covers and illustrations that Frazetta did for NATLAMP, but again, I didn't mention them all for space reasons. And yes, while "Dragula" is technically a comic-book cover, albeit a satiric one, it was completed long after Frazetta had quit working in comics. I've always regarded the "Dragula" cover simply as an illustration, but I'm willing to concede the point. To the best of my knowledge, "Werewolf," which appeared in CREEPY #1, is the last comic story of any length drawn by Frazetta. The only other comics work he did for Warren besides covers was the aforementioned "Loathsome Lore" page and anti-smoking ad. If I am in error and anyone knows of work Frazetta did in comics after the mid-'60s, I'd like to hear about it.

3. True enough, Bil, but I have a hunch that Frazetta's work will endure, if only because some of Frazetta's images have permeated the modern mass consciousness to the extent that they've become modern archetypes, like Marilyn Monroe, or the Coke bottle. That's the point I was striving to express, anyway.

4. This caption is rather unclear. I believe my note to Mark mentioned that this story was notable as the first Frazetta/Williamson collaboration for E.C. The city in question on page 29 is quite obviously the work of Roy Krenkel, although I don't know who inked it. The rest of the panel looks like Frazetta inks over Williamson pencils.

5. My source for the caption on page 38 identifying the Wild Bill Hickok painting as Frazetta's first published work was a 1975 fanzine titled THE FRAZETTA TREASURY. Thanks for correcting a major error, Bil.

6. In my notes, I labelled these drawings as Conan studies. They were sketches of Conan dressed in different costumes, which I'd noticed strongly resembled the costumes Frazetta used in the CONAN THE ADVENTURER cover, and the CONAN THE CONQUEROR cover, just to name two. Mark apparently thought my notes referred to the De Laurentiis Conan movies.

7. The illustration on page 43 was an intended dust jacket design. I know it was never used. This illustration was sent among a large batch of Frazetta Burroughs illustrations and may not have been labelled as an unused dust jacket. Oops.

8. True. This illustration was Xeroxed from a fanzine. The other Buster Crabbe heads pictured on page 49 were all either drawn for or actually printed in BUSTER CRABBE. The two illustrations page left are both from BUSTER CRABBE covers. The head lower right is, as you know, from the story "Savage World," a story originally drawn for BUSTER CRABBE comics by Williamson, with help from Frazetta (chiefly inking, such as the head shown), and others, including Roy Krenkel and Angelo Torres. When the title folded, Williamson

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retained possession of the art, and it remained unpublished until Wallace Wood redialogued it and printed it in WITZEND #1. Since then, the story has been reprinted by Marvel, during the 1970s.

9. This is true, but the LI'L ABNER sample printed was the only one I had on hand. Every collection has got some gaps in it, and mine, unfortunately, doesn't contain much of Frazetta's LI'L ABNER stuff. Any suggestions on where to get some ABNER reprints, Bil?

By the way, there is yet another error in the captions, this one on page 30. The BUCK ROGERS cover on page 31 is identified as being from "E.C.'s FAMOUS FUNNIES." E.C. never published FAMOUS FUNNIES, which was published by Eastern Color Printing from 1934 until 1955.

If anyone else noticed any other errors, I'd like to hear about it. It doesn't do anybody any good when erroneous information gets circulated without being corrected.

Glad you enjoyed the interview, Bil. You were one of the people I was hoping to hear from. Bob Barrett, are you listening?

— Steve Ringgenberg

COMICS INTERVIEW: A CLASSIC

Dear Dave.

T.M. Maple's idea for a BEST OF COMICS INTERVIEW is one of the best things I've heard in a long time! Think about it, not only could you run multi-part interviews in one piece, not only could you collect the Golden Age and Silver Age and other prime interest material into specific volumes — you could restore material which previously had to be edited out because of space considerations! You could reunite the participants for further discussions! You could pay royalties! You could kill the back issues ads! You could call it CLASSIC COMICS INTERVIEW! Do it, Dave! DO IT! Seriously, it is a great idea, and I look forward to seeing it realized. Until next time, thanks for MICRA.

Darrel L. Boatz
3885 Camelot Circle #203
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NEXT ISSUE: It's all here! ALAN MOORE bids farewell to THE WATCHMEN — and to comics, at least for now — in an exclusive interview! And you can learn more about the world of the Watchmen, material that never made it into the books — be here to find out how! Watch for THE WATCHMEN cover by Dave Gibbons on COMICS INTERVIEW #48!

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Comics Interview

So far, there are only four titles from David Anthony Kraft's publishing company, but I like all of them.

• *MICRA* is an acronym for *M*ind *C*ontrolled *R*emote *A*utomaton. It is also one heck of a good comic book by Lamar Waldron and Ted Boonthanakit. This is a 12-issue limited series about a crippled woman who can project her consciousness into an automaton (see the title).

That is a much-too-simplified summation of a rich, complex SF novel in comic-book form. Ted's art has been compared to many different American artists (none of whose work Ted has seen; he was born in Thailand and grew up in Africa) and is remarkably clear and exciting.

Grade: A.

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• *Aristocratic X-traterrestrial Time-Traveling Thieves* (*X-Thieves* for short) has had two first issues, which is annoying to indexers and compilers of price guides, but the bright, sprightly scripts by Henry Vogel and the appropriately humorous art of Mark Propst make up for that. One of the main features of this comic book is that, like the *Mad* comic books, the panels are filled with gags, such as the crisis hotline which warns: "New universe forming — disaster imminent!"

The Southern Knights make a guest appearance in the second first issue, in which the X-Thieves steal the formula for original Coca-Cola. This is one of the best of the funny comic books (and one of the handful that really *is* funny).

Grade: A.

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• I haven't seen the last couple of issues of *Southern Knights* yet but, unless the series has gone radically downhill since #16, this is still one of the best and most original of all the supergroups. Grade: A.

• While *Comics Interview* is not a comic book, I think I can squeeze in a recommendation. This excellent publication gives a well-rounded view of the industry, with interviews with writers, pencillers, inkers, letterers, colorists, and others.

Naturally, your interest in an issue will depend on who is being interviewed, but there have been 40 issues of *Comics Interview* and no totally dull ones — not even the *G.I. Joe* issue. Grade: A.

Four titles.
Four As. Four for four. Way to go, Dave.

— Don Thompson
COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE

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